

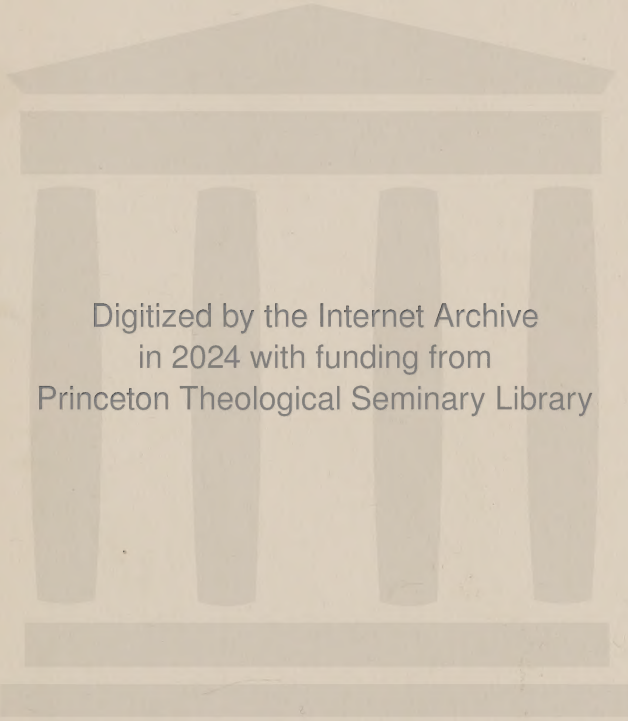
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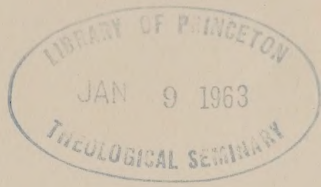
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**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN  
THEOLOGICAL FOCUS**





George M. Schreyer

CHRISTIAN  
EDUCATION *in*  
THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

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To  
my Mother and Father  
Vinnetta and Roy Schreyer  
who have lived and taught  
the Christian life



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PART I

THE THEOLOGICAL FOCUS



## ONE / WHAT IS HAPPENING IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OF THE twentieth century has been in constant evolution. Various schools of thought supported by worthy men but differing in philosophy and method have arisen. During the first forty years of the century, the major conflicting schools were Fundamentalism and Liberalism. About 1940 the theological emphasis of the crisis theologians and confessional theologians of Europe began to be felt in America. Before Liberal Christian educators of America knew what was happening, theologians and educators were feeling the birth pangs of needed changes in Christian education. This transition is in process at the present time, and it will eventually result in a complete rethinking and rebirth of Christian education.

In order to show what is happening in Christian education, the three schools of thought termed Fundamentalism, Social-Liberalism, and Theological-Supernaturalism will be discussed briefly.

### FUNDAMENTALISM

This school has held tenaciously to traditional concepts, stressing a transmissive, authoritarian approach to a strict literal Bibli-

cism. Fundamentalism believes that the only authority for Christian education is knowledge of, and submission to, the Bible as the infallible revelation of God. According to the Fundamentalists, any school of thought that claims the Bible is a fallible witness and that it needs correction by modern man is putting Christian education into a skeptical position because the Bible is not held as the sure Word of God. Fundamentalists believe the Bible must be released from man's subjective fancy and advocated as the divine authoritative norm of God for man.

Fundamentalists and Liberals have fought bitter battles over biblical authority and revelation, education, evolution, Christology, the social gospel, and salvation. In all these areas, the Fundamentalists sought to preserve orthodox Christianity based upon the infallible Bible. They felt the Liberals were mistaken in advocating for Christian education personal and historical surmises, and philosophical and pragmatic methods created by a science-dominated culture.

The Fundamentalist's stress was not on a gradual educational process, but on conversion from a person's lost condition inherited from the fall of Adam: man was saved by accepting Christ, for by Christ's death man's sins were atoned. This point of view is expressed in the words of Frank E. Gabelein:

A Christ-centered philosophy sees man in the divine image, but with that image ruined beyond human power to mend it. Yet the image is still able to make contact with fallen man; and as man turns from his sins and believes the life-giving good news about Christ, his sins are forgiven and he enters as a new creature the family of the redeemed. Thereafter, his development becomes a matter of Christian nurture.<sup>1</sup>

This quotation supports the Fundamentalist's position that

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<sup>1</sup> Gabelein, Frank E., *Christian Education in a Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 30.



Christian nurture comes after conversion, and is of little importance before conversion: Christian education helps man to grow in grace.

In spite of the literal-authoritarian approach, Liberalism benefited from the reactions of Fundamentalism. The criticism kept before the Liberals the need of God, biblical truth, and redemption. Too often the Liberals neglected personal prayer, evangelism, commitment, and generous giving, by becoming self-satisfied and secure in an exaggerated intellectualism. God to some Liberals became an impersonal force; life and God became disunited at points, and Christianity became a matter of "take it or leave it." The Fundamentalist-Liberal controversy ended about 1936, and Liberalism stood unchallenged as a philosophy of Christian nurture.

#### SOCIAL-LIBERALISM

Social-Liberal Christian education developed as a reaction to the theology and nurture of the nineteenth century. Christian education at that time was tied to a transcendental and supernatural theology which had broken relevancy with present-day living. The method was uneducative, and was related mostly to revivalism and adult patterns of communication. Toward the close of the nineteenth century, the advances in psychology and education began to be felt by Christian educators. It was not long until the Liberal school was born, and the social theory of Christian education arose mainly through the efforts of George A. Coe. This Social-Liberal theory was based on a theology<sup>?</sup> which stressed the immanence of God in the functional Christ-like values through social interaction. It sought to guide life situations and to reconstruct values in social relationships into higher and more Christian outcomes. This theory, stressing the immanence of God, broke definitely with the transcendental theory. It sought to make Christian education relevant to life

and to promote it by guiding personal and group experiences into higher Christlikeness.

The Social-Liberal theory showed little interest in the theological. In fact, theology was lost by many Christian educators; Christian education was based upon a social and naturalistic foundation which caused the emphasis to be placed on "life-centeredness," "experience-centeredness," "reconstruction of values," "anthropocentric interests," and "scientific-mindedness." This emphasis put great stress on man's ability to find God through search and reason. Human reason often became the seat of authority instead of the divine revelation of God. The objectiveness of God was lost because of the belief that God was immanent in all life, and that his revelation was an integral part of life. The Social-Liberal advocates accepted Paul's saying, "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28a). It was felt that to make God transcendental was to make God undiscernible, for God's presence and will were manifested in the worth and dignity of persons and social relations.

The Social-Liberal theory in Christian education had a tendency to give man overconfidence in his own goodness and ability to discern the holy. Little or no mention was made of sin, of man's predicament, and of the judgment of God. This reduced man's dependence and awe toward God as a personality beyond and above himself. The theory tended to obscure God, or to cause God to be ignored, or to make of God a silent partner. It became too inclusive, paying too much attention to the world and not enough attention to the gospel. Gradualism following the growth process began to be stressed to the point that confession, repentance, and conversion became lost words. The idea that man must respond to God's confrontations and that Christian education was to prepare man to become responsive seldom entered the process of Christian education. In the Social-Liberal

theory of Christian education, God seldom stood out objectively and clearly as love and judgment to be encountered.

### THEOLOGICAL-SUPERNATURALISM

About 1940 the theological clouds which began in Europe following World War I began settling upon the religious philosophy of America. This European theology, which has been called "crisis theology," was founded by Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. Both of these men were influenced by Sören Kierkegaard of Denmark. They in turn influenced the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr, one of the outstanding theologians of America.

This European crisis theology has been referred to by many as "neo-supernaturalism." The impact of its teachings fell mightily upon America in the form of God's transcendency and supernaturalness; of man's helplessness and sinfulness; of God's initiative toward man in his self-disclosure; of man's being saved by the confrontations of God through his revelation in the Bible, Christ, and the Spirit-filled church relationships; and of man's inability to discover God by reasoning philosophically. Man's discovery of God, in this view, comes through an affirmation of faith and through man's lack of achievement of the kingdom of God, for the latter is a gift which is given by God in his own time and way.

These teachings were used to attack the doctrine of God's immanence and man's dignity and creativeness, as advocated by the Social-Liberal theory. The educational process of the Social-Liberal theory, which was based upon a moral and spiritual development in individual and social experiences, came under hot condemnation. Man's transformation, according to the new supernaturalism, came not in ordinary experiences but at those moments when God's confrontations became evident through a revealed Christian faith. It was claimed that man's salvation came

through responses to God's revelation made evident in Christ, the Bible, and the Christian fellowship of the church.

Many Christian educators found it undesirable to utilize all these teachings in modern Christian education, because a strict interpretation of God's transcendence might lead people into a disillusioned naturalism. A stress upon the sinful, helpless nature of man might kill any initiative on the part of man in his response to God. The attack on philosophical and scientific reason could lead man to irrational faith and conformity to authoritarianism. The teaching that man has no significant part in progressing toward the realization of the kingdom of God might reduce man's consecrated effort to cooperate with God in living the kingdom's way.

After a thorough study of the new supernaturalism, many Christian educators saw that a strict Barthianism was not what American Christian education needed; but they did see that the Social-Liberal theory of Christian education needed rethinking at critical points, especially in regard to God and man. Numbers of Christian educators are pushing a renaissance in Christian education, believing that the Social-Liberal theory of Christian education is lacking in a strong, well-defined theological perspective. It is felt that God's role has to be strengthened; it must be taken from the state of a weak, social immanence, and elevated to a transcendence which is objective and yet relevant to modern life. The feeling is that the sovereignty of God must be magnified and man interpreted as a creature responsive to God through the divine confrontations of the past, the present, and the future, which have been or will be available for personal encounters.

### THE CHANGING FOCUS

1. *The Purpose of Christian Education.* The purpose of Christian education is to aid persons in their developmental responses toward encounters with God and to guide them in appropriating



God's revelation in personal and social living. It is to lead persons beyond the preoccupation of self-enrichment to personal encounters with God, in which they experience the love, mercy, and judgment of God in the midst of worldly tensions and human predicaments. The theological purpose does not rule out Christian growth. The human being is not subjected to an abstract theology; his response toward God is guided through the stages of his own physical, mental, social, and religious maturation. At first, his encounters with God occur mainly through the objects of his own world, his own personal feelings, appreciations, and ideas rather than through formal, symbolic, and biblical concepts.

2. *The Scope of Christian Education.* Christian education is moving away from the idea that it functions in the scope of man's total environment. It is realized now that much of man's environment is not of God and is immoral rather than moral. It is desirable that man live in a perfected society of God and have all his experiences therein, but that condition is not a reality. Christian education can function only in an environment where God can be ever creative through persons and situations informed by the Spirit-imbued community. Christian education is making a clear distinction between a man-centered environment and that which is God-centered. A secular society cannot produce experiences for man which will make him godly; he becomes godly only in a community which is dependent upon, and open to, the righteousness of God.

3. *The Spirit of Christian Education.* The new trend in Christian education is quite clear in its spirit and outreach: it is responsive to the past, for God has spoken in historical events, especially in biblical situations; it is responsive to the present, for it will cause man to grow in his appreciation of God and to seek God-encounters; and it is open to the future, for there are new findings to be made in man's personality, basic needs, growth

patterns, capacities, and limitations, as his social and scientific worlds unfold with unrealized spiritual potentiality. The emerging spirit of Christian education is related to the belief that God is Supreme Reality and that there is much of God to be disclosed in new attitudes and deeds of persons committed to his will and way of life. In this open viewpoint of God's revelation, man must be humble and submissive in his role and never seek to be coercive in determining divine results.

4. *Human Nature and the Human Situation.* The focus at this point has moved from an optimistic, creative view of man, to a more pessimistic view of him as being a dependent, sinful, human creature who can fulfill his destiny only in God. Man understood himself formerly in terms of goodness and personal ability. He refused, or neglected, self-examination in the light of theological views, which has resulted in his inability to see himself as a sinner. He trusted himself and relied upon his ability to correct and to solve all his predicaments. The new trend is to help man see himself as a sinner, a person who lives too much in a continuous independence from God; to help him realize that his nature is so far from the righteousness of God that he cannot through his own ability achieve Christlikeness; to point up the fact that his willful acts of sin are so strong that his salvation could not possibly come from his ordinary purposeful experiences. Christian education is now seeking to help man see himself in need, and to realize that his salvation comes only in a dependence upon God.

5. *The Curriculum of Christian Education.* The curriculum of Christian education is changing greatly as it is viewed less from a social, naturalistic philosophy and more from a theological perspective. The social concerns of modern living are not eliminated; they are being interpreted in a theological climate in which they become more of an agency through which God may be encountered. The curriculum is changing from its authoritarian or

propositional dogmatism of the past toward a fresh response to God's self-disclosure in biblical history and in all modern events related to the community of God as exemplified by the church and the works of the Holy Spirit. The curriculum is definitely emphasizing the biblical story as a revelation, both old and new, and as a reopened agency through which God may speak and reveal himself in love, judgment, and forgiveness. The biblical curriculum of the past has been too wooden, or too critical, to allow the spirit of God to elicit from man a warm and personal response. Man must begin to face God in the Bible and in other curricular materials, or Christian education is wasting time and energy under a false pretense.

6. *The Method of Christian Education.* The methodology of Christian education is functioning within the framework of both education and theology. It insists on meanings, insights, and feelings which are dynamic and relevant, and which work toward the wholeness of life. The changing focus is derived from a theological climate in which all activities and experiences are made meaningful. The educational process is not allowed to rest on the low standards of "discovering truth," or "searching for values," or of nurturing Christian growth through "creative activities," for thus God and his revelation would be almost certain to be ignored or left to the student's hit or miss discovery. Teaching now has a theological concern: it is to guide persons into an understanding of and commitment to God, the Christian faith, the Christian living. The new focus is not a return to authoritarian indoctrination, or to rote memorization. It supports the best in educational procedure regarding the laws of learning and growth, and regarding sound means of communication. In addition, it directs the entire educational process toward a theological orientation.

7. *The Church in Christian Education.* The focus is now turning toward the true meaning and purpose of the church: the

church is a responsive organism imbued with the Holy Spirit, which shares the Christian faith and aids persons within the spiritual community in their responsiveness to God. The church is awakening to its great need for unity in the spirit of love, and is working so that it can become an agency for mediating the spirit of God in human life. The church has accepted the fact that it cannot fulfill its perennial task or be true to its biblical origin and remain a "social club" or a self-motivated group of individuals propagating a way of life that is merely respectable and morally acceptable. This realization has caused the church to understand that a social norm is not sufficient. It must be empowered by the indwelling spirit of God, which needs to be shared by all persons in worship, teaching-learning experiences, service, and Christian fellowship. It is in this way that they become recipients of a divine transforming power.

8. *The Home-Community Relationships.* God's community of believers lives, teaches, and learns in an everwidening circumference. Thus the home and the community are of concern to Christian education for it is within these areas that people are influenced for good or evil. This fact has caused Christian education to extend its program by seeking to use and increase the effectiveness of the home and the community as channels of God's revelation. The home and community interests, functions, and concerns can promote right relationships with God, and they can help persons to live in the perspective of Christian truths. Transforming these wider areas of living makes more possible the full commitment of the individual to God and his truth.

This changing focus in Christian education is being recognized mainly on the seminary and graduate school level, where most of the philosophy of religion and Christian education is evaluated and determined. The local churches are not fully aware of this changing emphasis. To be frank, some churches are not con-

scious of any change in Christian education. Such oversight and complacency will not continue to exist indefinitely, for the new focus will be carried to local congregations by more and more ministers and directors of Christian education.

## TWO / SOCIAL-LIBERAL PERSPECTIVE

BEFORE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CAN be defined fully and its philosophy more comprehensively discussed in terms of its new focus, it is necessary to consider in greater depth the Social-Liberal theory of Christian education which held sway over most of the first half of the twentieth century. A fair approach, it seems, would be to allow several outstanding persons who advocated the Social-Liberal theory, both personalistic and naturalistic in viewpoint, to state their definitions of Christian education, and to present their underlying philosophies. Critical comments will be made occasionally in order to guide the reader toward the reasons why modern Christian education has moved from the social emphasis based upon God's immanence to a theological orientation stressing God's transcendent self-disclosure to man.

George A. Coe

It [Christian education] is the systematic, critical examination and reconstruction of relations between persons, guided by Jesus' assumption that persons are of infinite worth, and by the hypothesis of the existence of God, the Great Valuer of Persons.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Coe, George A., *What Is Christian Education?* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 296.



This definition bases Christian education on social values and a divine immanence of God which is operative in persons. According to Dr. Coe, "We cannot apprehend God, or reveal him to others, except in and through our own or others' ethical regard for persons."<sup>2</sup> He further declares, "The deepening of personal life (which is social), and the deepening of our faith in God, must take place at the same point, and through the same process."<sup>3</sup>

In the foreword of his epoch-making book, *A Social Theory of Religious Education*, Coe insists that "the nature of goodness" be made concrete in our next door neighbor. When this is done, "Christian experience comes out of the clouds, because in our dealing with our brother whom we have seen we are dealing with the Father whom we have not seen—yes, we here come into relation with what is deepest in his character and purpose."<sup>4</sup>

For the aim of Christian education, Coe works from a reference of social idealism, believing that "Divine love . . . cannot realize itself anywhere but in a genuine industrial democracy."<sup>5</sup> From this viewpoint, he continues to claim that the aim of Christian education becomes "growth of the young toward and into mature and efficient devotion to the democracy of God, and happy self-realization therein. . . . The aim is growth because there is now no separation between human society and divine, and because the rudimentary conditions of human society are already provided for in our social instincts."<sup>6</sup>

Because Coe's philosophy of Christian education has been influenced by the pragmatic philosophy of progressive education, and because he criticized traditional concepts of Christian edu-

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 271 f.

<sup>4</sup> Coe, George A., *A Social Theory of Religious Education*, (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), p. vii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> *Loc. cit.*

cation which stressed transcendent ideas, instructional abstractions, and authoritarianism, his concept of Christian education has been under attack for some time. Many Christian educators believe Coe's theory of Christian education should be centered more in a direct approach to God, and less centered in finding God and Christian values through personal interaction. It is the feeling of these educators that Coe could serve better the present age had he made clearer the distinctive role of both God and man. If he had made it plain that God and the Christian gospel do transcend man's efforts, and that the divine Spirit does work with man in the growth of man's redemption in social interaction when the social relationships are embedded in the Christian *koinonia* which supports Christian communication, his theory now would have a more popular acclaim.

#### William C. Bower

Christian education is "seeking to do what Christ did—to bring ourselves face to face with the realities of living, to have faith in life as the good gift of God, to have a fresh and vivid experience of God through the mediation of the common life, to discover in every experience the qualities that spring from the deepest spiritual values, and thus to commit ourselves to Christ and his cause. Nothing less than this is Christian education."<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Bower's definition is based upon a functional concept of Christian education. He seeks to place Christian education in "a functional relation to the experience of living persons and groups."<sup>8</sup> He is interested in making God and religion immanent in the personal and social experiences of living so that experi-

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<sup>7</sup> Bower, William Clayton, *Christ and Christian Education* (Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1943), p. 73.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

ences may be controlled and changed—"thus rendering an experience that is only potentially Christian into one that is genuinely Christian."<sup>9</sup> The main interest of Christian education, according to Bower, is to guide personal and social experiences by reevaluating and enriching them so they may become fully Christian. "Christian education becomes a guided experience in facing life situations and in bringing them through to Christian outcomes."<sup>10</sup>

Bower reacts against making religion "something given and static invading human experience from some remote and supposedly supernatural realm." He holds that it should be viewed "as functionally related to man's deepening and widening experience and therefore something dynamic and growing."<sup>11</sup>

Bower interprets the curriculum as guided experience. He states that his philosophy of the curriculum is given in his book, *Curriculum of Religious Education*, on which he comments:

The thesis of this experience-centered approach was that religious education is concerned primarily not with the transmission of knowledge about the Bible or the Christian tradition but with the growth of persons into Christlike personalities in social relations; that the content of the curriculum consists of the experience of growing persons in responding in Christian ways to real life-situations; that the Bible and other forms of the Christian heritage are resources for helping the growing person to interpret his experience and to judge its possible outcomes; to make choices and commitments; and to carry these commitments through beyond verbalization to action.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> Bower, William C., *Through the Years—Personal Memoirs* (Transylvania College Press, 1957), p. 80.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Concerning the technique of guidance, he writes in his book *Character Through Creative Experience*:

Method takes the form of guidance by which the teacher assists the learner in becoming aware of his experience, in analyzing the situation for its factors and possible outcomes, in weighing the possible outcomes in terms of Christian values, in choosing the best outcome, in seeing it through to the complete act. Thus learning becomes a creative achievement.<sup>13</sup>

Bower's main concern is the establishment of an educational approach to an experience-centered curriculum, so that the curriculum may become units of experiences which may be guided into Christian commitments. He seeks to bring Christ's idealism into functional relation with experience and in so doing to help persons grow by inquiring into and evaluating life situations which when thus enriched become related to Christian purposes and values.

God, to Bower, is a dynamic reality moving creatively in all experience. He states, "God is coming to be thought of as participating in the ongoing processes of a realistic world and as entering into the struggles, the aspirations, and the achievements of humankind and as man's constant, intimate, and great Companion."<sup>14</sup> Truth has lost its transcendency. In his words, "Truth itself has lost its absolute quality and takes on the nature of a becoming that arises within the experience process, and is validated, not by the guarantees of a divine revelation, but by its results in experience."<sup>15</sup> Sin is taken from the supernatural. He contends, "Sin has come to be not so much an offense against a detached and vengeful God as unintelligent and blundering conduct that frustrates the highest ends of living."<sup>16</sup> It is at this point

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<sup>13</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Bower, William C., *Religion and the Good Life* (Abingdon, 1933), p. 67.

<sup>15</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> *Loc. cit.*

of immanence that many Christian educators feel Bower has lost God as a being to be confronted in judgment, forgiveness, and love.

### Harrison S. Elliott

Religious educators, therefore, emphasize human responsibility for meeting the conditions under which growth in Christian life and experience is possible and think of Christian education as the process through which this takes place.<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Elliott included himself in the group of religious educators referred to above. He believed that God and Christian values are mediated to man through social experiences in life situations. Elliott's main concern has been to establish a theology for liberal Christian education and to defend the same against Neo-orthodoxy. He revolts against the idea that Christian education should be a direct approach to God separate from human reason and reverent search. He states, "Everything that man knows about God has grown out of his experience in the world and out of his reflections upon the manifestations of God in nature and in human life."<sup>18</sup> He furthers this idea with these words: "Vitality of religious experience is not realized by turning away from the problems and decisions of human life in efforts to find a direct relationship to God. It is only as individuals and groups are engaged in the enterprises of God on earth that they can truly find a relationship to him."<sup>19</sup>

Elliott believes that if persons are to be Christian, they must have experiences in living situations which have manifestations of God and which will add meaning to Christian commitment.

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<sup>17</sup> Elliott, Harrison S., *Can Religious Education Be Christian?* (Macmillan, 1940), p. 313. Used by permission.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 311.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278.



He stands behind the philosophy of the social process of Christian education, refusing to believe it to be too humanistic; in fact, he claims it as the most outstanding method of bringing people into a vital experience with God. He claims "that the process is neither from the human to the divine nor from the divine to the human. The human and the divine are integrally interrelated in any revelation of God."<sup>20</sup>

It is at this point that many modern Christian educators differ with Elliott. They feel that man in his relations can go only so far, and then God must enter into the experience in making a unique revelation above man and his social setting. Elliott joins Coe and Bower in stressing the social approach to Christian education which discovers God immanent in man's total experience. This approach puts them in opposition to the modern theological stress of the direct, transcendent approach to God through relationships with God, with Jesus, and in the truths of the Bible.

### Harry C. Munro

Christian education includes all those provisions which are made through church and home for persons to have those experiences which are essential to their commitment to, and their growth in, the Christian life, and to their participation in achieving a more Christian social order.<sup>21</sup>

This definition is based upon a liberal philosophy of Christian education. Dr. Munro is interested in providing and guiding experiences which have Christian possibilities and which liberate persons in their growth and commitment to Christ and his likeness. He denies that liberal Christian education takes its philoso-

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>21</sup> Munro, Harry C., *Protestant Nurture: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Prentice-Hall, 1956), p. 141.



phy, purpose, and content from public education. He says, "If it is to be Christian education, these must come from within Christianity itself. What we are saying is that the liberal or liberating type of Christian education, taking into account the scientific and democratic principles which actually root in Christianity itself, has developed an educational philosophy, basically Christian, and yet congenial to liberal public education as well."<sup>22</sup>

Christian education is experience-centered and Christ-centered, according to Munro. "It must provide experiences in Christlike living, and yet, lest these experiences be artificial and irrelevant to real life, it must identify them with the real ongoing life of home and community."<sup>23</sup> Christ is to be experienced, not imposed, as one engages in an environment which creates incentives for Christlike attitudes and behavior. In this experiencing of Christ within a personal-social environment, Munro claims that the guidance of the Holy Spirit is put to a test. If one follows a liberating, creative type of Christian education, he must have "complete faith in the Spirit's guidance," and he must dare to "trust the free spirit of growing persons with all the resources for the richest possible experience."<sup>24</sup> Based upon the immanence of God through the Holy Spirit, Munro finds little difference between knowing and doing, and between Christian doctrine and Christian experience. He is interested in the social because of personality potentialities that are sacred and because of the social teachings of Jesus.

Social-Liberal advocates of the naturalistic point of view, based upon the interpretation of religious growth as derived from experiences and spiritual values that are immanent, include the following:

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

## Ernest J. Chave

Religious education must be conceived as the total comprehensive plan by which leaders in all realms of life cooperate to further the growth of personal-social values and attainments.<sup>25</sup>

Dr. Chave views religious education from a naturalistic and functional position. He claims that "religion is a persistent quest, with growing insight for the basic meanings and values of life, and a consequent sustained effort to extend spiritual learnings and to realize human possibilities."<sup>26</sup> He further claims that "religion arises in the primary adjustments of life and is pervasive of all life,"<sup>27</sup> for life is unitary, not divided into sacred and secular parts. Religion, so conceived, affords a creative, natural process of growth through which persons must cooperate, discern, and share, if they are to have access to the divine forces which are pervasive in all of life's experiences.

Naturalism and functionalism are plausible to Chave because to him, "God is not an imaginary supernatural being, but the word is the name for the most important phases of one's cosmic environment on which personal-social life is dependent."<sup>28</sup> Therefore, religion is functional in nature for it deals with the exploration and refined appreciation of values found operative in universal meanings of life. Chave states, "Instead of thinking of religion as something supernatural, archaic, foreign, and talked about chiefly in church or by theologically minded people, it is discovered as a vital quality in every adjustment of life."<sup>29</sup>

In regard to the redemption of man, Chave reasons: "The forces of redemption are in the growth processes of normal life,

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<sup>25</sup> Chave, Ernest J., *A Functional Approach to Religious Education* (University of Chicago Press), p. 6. Copyright 1947 by the University of Chicago.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. v.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

and religion is but the discovery, exaltation, and use of these."<sup>30</sup> To Chave, when man becomes obedient to the laws of spiritual growth which are inherent in the nature of the universe and in man himself, he is realizing his fullest potentiality which leads to a growing salvation. Therefore, man's beliefs and living come from "a vital, developing appreciation of an inexhaustible creative order . . . rather than from any theory about the creator or sustainer of this order."<sup>31</sup>

Religious educators, according to Chave, must have faith in the creative and spiritual forces which imbue man's environment. They must not seek the past for their message but find it in contemporary life which is pervasively filled with qualities of religious growth. The main task to be accomplished in religious education is "to conserve, integrate, and direct the most promising lines of spiritual growth"<sup>32</sup> in all of the phases of personal-social living. Religious education must help persons live spiritually. It must help them live in harmony with the natural process, integrating all learning into a creative whole.

Chave feels that religious education must become naturalistic and functional because it is the true way to rise above sectarianism, divisions, magic, superstition, hypnotism, and unfounded theological speculation in religion. Naturalism and functionalism are the sure means by which man may discover the divine at work in his world, and the positive way for him to share in the divine process for a fuller and satisfying life.<sup>33</sup>

### Sophia L. Fahs

Mrs. Sophia L. Fahs believes that it is of prime importance "to learn how to help children to think about ordinary things

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6 f.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

until insights and feelings are found which have a religious quality."<sup>34</sup>

Mrs. Fahs's definition of religious education is based upon the philosophy that one's religion is the unification of all his specific beliefs into an emotional whole within the totality of his experiences.<sup>35</sup> She holds to the theory that religious development comes through the natural process of growth in meanings and values derived from natural and social experiences of one's environment. As a person becomes related to this creative process and is used as a channel for this creativity or universal cosmic power (called God by some), then he is open to be guided into higher expressions of values and religious maturity. Such a philosophy places the main emphasis on a person's educational efforts in discovering through thought and feeling higher values in the wholeness of life.

Mrs. Fahs follows the school of religious naturalism, for "God is immanent and natural, rather than transcendental and supernatural."<sup>36</sup> God is the symbol for this creativity and self-renewing power which permeates the wholeness and unity of all life. Man's transformation comes progressively through the maturation process as he submits, allies, and identifies himself to the creative event or controlling power which is cosmic and natural in the wholeness of reality. God is viewed as the spiritual force that is all around persons and yet that cannot be manipulated or exploited for purely selfish purposes. If individuals are learners, adventurers, and experimenters, they can synthesize new values and insights which aid them toward their salvation.

"There is no special 'religious knowledge,'"<sup>37</sup> says Mrs. Fahs.

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<sup>34</sup> Fahs, Sophia Lyon, *Today's Children and Yesterday's Heritage* (Beacon, 1952), p. 179.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

She claims that "all nature is one and that the spiritual and the material are intermingled and interdependent . . . that the unity and meaning for all existence is something observable."<sup>38</sup> She continues, "All life, all existence, is appropriate subject matter for investigation."<sup>39</sup> The Bible and books about God, prayer, Jesus, or Moses are not the most important in religious development, but rather those materials which are present and vital and that create experiences of wonder and surprise, which provoke thinking and questioning, and which bring emotional conflicts, are the most profitable in teaching religion.

"To inspire in children a belief in the worth of their present, day-by-day experiences, through their own discoveries, is an important goal for any educator."<sup>40</sup> The teacher's responsibility is to understand the creative process of learning and to guide persons into life's creative situations which result in values for wholesome living. These values, being unitary and instrumental, move progressively toward an ideal man and an ideal society.

What are the general claims made by the advocates of the Social-Liberal theory of Christian education?

### *Personalistic Views*

1. Christian education is based upon social values and a divine immanence of God which is operative in persons and their environment.
2. The purpose of Christian education is to guide, evaluate, and enrich experiences of common life into higher Christian meanings and outcomes.
3. The curriculum is experience-centered and stresses units

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<sup>38</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

of experiences which serve to guide the individual into Christian commitment.

4. Christian education must be functionally related to life situations, for in such a context God is found to be meaningful.

5. Christian education must be closely related to human reason and reverent search.

6. Christian education must trust the guidance of the Holy Spirit which is manifested in the creative spirit of growing persons.

### *Naturalistic Views*

1. Christian education is concerned with total life, for religion is pervasive of all life—there is no division between the sacred and the secular.

2. God is natural, not supernatural, and is found operative in universal meanings of life.

3. Salvation comes through a growing appreciation of the divine processes integrated in the creative wholeness of personality.

4. The message of Christian education comes from contemporary living, not from any historical event of the Bible.

5. The main emphasis is placed upon a person's educative efforts in discovering higher values and insights in the wholeness of life.

6. Persons who become learners, adventurers, and experimenters can find new values and insights which lead to the wholeness of life.

7. Christian education can be fruitful when it understands the creative process of learning and guides it into creative situations of life.



### THREE / THEOLOGICAL-SUPERNATURAL PERSPECTIVE

NOW THAT THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL theory of Christian education has been discussed through the writings of several of its outstanding advocates and conclusions drawn as to its main teachings, the same procedure needs to be followed with regard to the Theological-Supernaturalistic school by allowing several of its outstanding advocates to express their views on Christian education. A comparison of this chapter with the preceding one should highlight the issues that have separated these two schools of Christian education.

#### H. Shelton Smith

Vital Christian nurture is rooted in a faith . . . that goes deeper than mere faith in "growing values," . . . [it is] in a Christian revelation. The Christian teacher, therefore, does not share his faith in Christ with the child in a spirit of absolute tentativeness, but in the conviction that in Christ God has spoken an eternally valid word to humanity.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Smith is seeking to direct Christian education away from contemporary liberal tenets, which he feels are too anthropocen-

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, H. Shelton, *Faith and Nurture* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), pp. 113 f.

tric, and toward a more theocentric emphasis. The question that controls Smith's thinking is: "Shall Protestant nurture realign its theological foundations with the newer currents of Christian thought, or shall it resist those currents and merely reaffirm its faith in traditional liberalism?"<sup>2</sup> The answer to this question, according to Smith, is that contemporary liberalism must be reinterpreted because it is "basically outmoded, and must therefore be critically reconsidered and revised."<sup>3</sup>

Smith's main attack on contemporary liberal Christian education centers in the idea that liberal Christian education is too subjective and social, which comes as a result of an overemphasis on the immanence of God who indwells the natural world process. He emphasizes the transcendence of God which stresses the divine initiative rather than human striving with its meaning centered in human life. Religious growth, he claims, does not evolve from human goodness but from a sovereign God who discloses his revelation in the historical Christ.

Before Christian education can be fruitful, it must, according to Smith, give up its optimistic theories which deal with the dignity and worth of persons, its educational process based upon social experiences, its idea that the kingdom of God is emerging in terms of a social ideal democracy, and its gospel of human self-salvation through experimentalism. The reason Smith is against the above ideas is that divine immanence has allowed liberalism "to conceive of man as being essentially divine in the depth of his being, and therefore as containing within himself the essential principle of his own worth and government."<sup>4</sup>

Smith contends: "The religious solution to our contemporary culture does not lie merely in uncovering the spiritual elements of that culture. It lies rather in a transcendent experience of the

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

kingdom of God.”<sup>5</sup> “Christian nurture holds that human value is enhanced when it is connected with a transcendent source in God.”<sup>6</sup> “Protestant nurture is feeble because it is rooted in a sub-Christian gospel,”<sup>7</sup> and it must therefore be sterile. Smith feels that Christian education must return to God who is supremely worthful; and that man’s worth grows out of his relation to God, for man’s highest end is to glorify his Creator. To help man in his divine encounter and to appropriate God’s revelation is the main task of Christian education.

### James D. Smart

We teach so that through our teaching God may work in the hearts of those whom we teach to make of them disciples wholly committed to his gospel, with an understanding of it, and with a personal faith that will enable them to bear convincing witness to it in word and action in the midst of an unbelieving world.<sup>8</sup>

Smart is defining Christian education in terms of the theological. He is appalled at the crisis in which he feels the liberals have led Christian education; it has lost its soul, its power to transform life, because it has lost God’s revelation in the theological and biblical setting. He says, “The literature of Christian education is marked by the absence of serious and thorough theological investigations. The Christian educator apparently has in general assumed that his subject is educational rather than theological.”<sup>9</sup> The theological-biblical orientation in Christian education is seen by Smart not as a passing fancy but as the true foundation. He declares, “This is no passing mood of nostalgia for old theologies

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>8</sup> Smart, James D., *The Teaching Ministry of the Church* (Westminster), p. 107. Copyright 1954 by Walter L. Jenkins. Used by permission.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

that will soon fade and leave the way clear for a revival of liberalism. The future will see, not a weakening, but a strengthening and deepening of theological concern."<sup>10</sup> So, according to Smart, we are at the beginning of a new era in Christian education when we begin recovering our interest in the theological and biblical gospel.

Much is made of the weak moralism in Christian education. Both teachers and the curriculum are plagued with telling students how to be good, respectable, and acceptable in society. In moralization, the Christian ethic is usually separated from the Christian gospel. Unless there is a foundational meaning and judgment made possible through biblical revelation, the roots of Christian education have been severed. Smart claims, "The real need is for an ongoing process, a constantly renewed critique, in which all the phenomena that appear in the field of the church's education will be examined in the light of the essential Christian revelation, in order to discern at each point what is Christian and what is not."<sup>11</sup>

The church, in order to fulfill its purpose, must center its content and method in biblical theology. Without the Scriptures, the members of the church cannot discern their true position. Smart contends, "In the Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testaments, we are constantly aware of two churches: a true and a false, a church that is responding to God in faith and obedience and a church that is content with its own moral and religious attainments and refuses to let God have his way with it."<sup>12</sup> This discernment is made clear to the church, for it is the Scriptures that make the modern church rebel against the false and to reshape itself in the likeness of its true position.

The Scriptures are central in the curriculum. It is through the

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

Scriptures that God speaks and makes himself known to men. "They [the Scriptures] are to be studied, not for their own sake, but for the sake of the revelation of truth and life that may take place through them."<sup>13</sup> People must hear what God has to say and allow the cutting edge of his word to keep them alive to his will and truth.

In regard to teaching, Smart insists that church education must have respect for the freedom of individuals, allowing them free expression so that their faith will be their own. This freedom, however, is guided by a subjection to God. Smart explains, "We are anxious to lead them [individuals] to the point where they discover their own true self-control in coming unconditionally under the control of God's spirit."<sup>14</sup> He contends that man is free only in subjection to God, that as he becomes alive to the truth of God is he truly free.

Smart's main contention is that the church and its education must return to the authority of the Bible and regain its spiritual vigor. If the church continues its present course, it will end in failure; it can succeed only as it turns people toward a gospel commitment and as it helps them to witness to the biblical truths revealed in God's revelation.

### Lewis J. Sherrill

Christian education is the attempt, ordinarily by members of the Christian community, to participate in and to guide the changes which take place in persons in their relationships with God, with the church, with other persons, with the physical world, and with oneself.<sup>15</sup>

The philosophy underlying this definition is basically centered

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>15</sup> Sherrill, Lewis Joseph, *The Gift of Power* (Macmillan, 1955), p. 82.



in man's encounter with a self-revealing God. Man's confrontation with divine revelation is for Dr. Sherrill the core of Christian education. It is under such a condition that changes take place in persons that can result in redemption. A common word for Sherrill is "confrontation." By this word he means divine initiative and human response. He makes it plain that confrontation could be advanced to the degree that all human initiative could be lost in man's seeking a divine encounter, since it is God who takes the initiative. This need not be the case, Sherrill feels, for confrontation can exalt human initiative and human responsibility toward this encounter. He states, "In Christian education we are given the opportunity to participate with one another in that encounter wherein God goes forth to meet the soul struggling for its existence."<sup>16</sup> In this response of man to God's initiative, man is still open to guidance. Persons may through such guidance help each other to respond to divine revelation.

The scene of this activity of Christian education is in "a worshiping community which is indwelt by the Spirit of God. Being indwelt by the Spirit, the relationships between the members are capable of becoming channels of the corrective, redemptive, and re-creative power of God. In such a society those who preach the Word of God and those who teach the Word of God are alike worthy of honor in that they are 'laborers together with God.' Yet in that co-laboring it is 'God who gives the increase.'"<sup>17</sup> This type of Christian education is not all God nor all man. "It is bi-polar; that is, it is concerned with the *meeting* between God and the human creature, and with the tension which rises within the encounter, calling for human response to God and for divine response to man."<sup>18</sup>

Christian education is true to its purpose when it helps man

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>18</sup> *Loc. cit.*



place his predicaments—which means his needs, problems, and anxieties—under the judgment and inspiration of the divine revelation so that he may witness to that revelation. Sherrill wishes to push Christian education beyond the bounds of “searching for truth,” “discovering truth,” and “creative activity,” in order that God may not be overlooked and crowded out of the person’s religious concerns. God’s self-disclosure to man and man’s response is the key to Christian education. It is through this encounter that Christian education can change its emphasis from information about God to God himself, the source of all living. In the following words, Sherrill gives us the reason why this God-man encounter is so important to Christian education:

For when man encounters the Self-revealing God he is confronted, not by a release of fresh divine information to be digested, not by some new and infallible dogma about God, not by a list of new rules to be observed or old ones to be furbished up again; he is confronted by none of these trap-pings of religion and churchcraft, but by a Person who offers himself to us in love and in judgment, and calls upon us to give ourselves a living sacrifice in response. It is a matter of personal communion. If this is the core of revelation, so must it be the core of Christian education.<sup>19</sup>

Randolph C. Miller

This is Christian education for the present moment, the point at which God and man enter a renewed relationship within a community of persons.<sup>20</sup>

Dr. Miller’s basic orientation to Christian education is theo-logical in nature, described by him as the “truth-about-God-in-

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83 f.

<sup>20</sup> Miller, Randolph Crump, *Biblical Theology and Christian Education* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1956), p. 4.

relation-to-man.”<sup>21</sup> He feels that Christian education must be based upon a Christian theology that is relevant and at the same time is supported by an educational process. “The purpose of Christian education,” says Miller, “is to place God at the center and to bring the individual into the right relationship with God and his fellows within the perspective of the fundamental Christian truths about all of life.”<sup>22</sup> Once this purpose is accepted, Miller feels that the clue has been found that will release Christian education from its present-day weakness to its proper God-given role in life. He makes this clear in the following statement:

The clue to Christian education is the rediscovery of a relevant theology which will bridge the gap between content and method, providing the background and perspective of Christian truth by which the best methods and content will be used as tools to bring the learners into the right relationship with the living God who is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, using the guidance of parents and the fellowship of life in the church as the environment in which Christian nurture will take place.<sup>23</sup>

Miller’s approach is in opposition to the theory of “reconstructing social values toward Christian outcomes” supported by Coe, Bower, and Elliott. Miller is concerned with the individual’s encounter with God. He advocates an evangelism based upon Christian truth and interpreted through a God-filled community [the church] and the Bible, which is God’s historical revelation. He believes that before Christian education can be vital, all Christian educators must be able to say: “The chief source of all our teaching is the Bible, the chief interest of our teaching is the

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<sup>21</sup> Miller, Randolph C., *The Clue to Christian Education* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1950), p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

learner, and the chief end of our teaching is the God and Father of Jesus Christ."<sup>24</sup>

Explaining further, Miller says that Christian education "must confront every learner with Jesus Christ, so that he will put his trust in God through Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit live as Christ's disciple within the dynamic fellowship of a truly Christian church."<sup>25</sup> This "community of persons," being imbued by God, communicates through relationships which are redemptive and which lead persons involved into "God's redemptive act in Christ."

Miller suggests that Christian education keep two words centered in its thinking—"relevance" and "relationship." If theology is not relevant, it ceases to support the educational process and to maintain an interacting relationship of persons, especially with God.

To Miller, Christian education is more than goodness, social ideals, behavior, traditions, and creeds; it is an encounter with the God of Jesus Christ revealed through God's self-disclosure in his biblical revelation and in his spirit-filled community.

What are the general claims made by the advocates of the Theological-Supernatural theory of Christian education?

- » Christian education is rooted in a theological perspective: God's self-disclosure and man's response.
- » Christian education in its theological perspective must be supported by an educational process.
- » The power of Christian education is more dependent upon the sovereignty of God than upon the goodness of man.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>25</sup> Miller, Randolph C., *Education for Christian Living* (Prentice-Hall, 1956), p. 54.

» The main task of Christian education is to help man in his divine encounters and to appropriate God's revelation.

» Christian education must help prepare man for God's confrontations which become relevant to and immanent in life through the Holy Spirit.

» Man's state is sinful and becomes of worth only as he lives in dependence and response to God and divine revelation.

» The redemptive role of Christian education comes from a community of persons imbued with the Spirit of God.

» A responsive man may become a co-worker with God, but at all times it is God who gives the increase.

» God's revelation is expressed mainly in the Bible, Christ, and the ongoing experiences of the present-day church.

## FOUR / CHRISTIAN EDUCATION RESTATED

A NEW THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE is needed for Christian education. The Social-Liberal theory of yesterday has reduced God to such immanence that there is little distinction between the roles of God and man. If Christian education is to be spiritually strong and effective, it must reclaim the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and it must educate man to his proper role as a creature dependent on and responsive to God and his revelation. The manward side of Christian education must return to the principle expressed in Isaiah 55:8 in these words: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord."

### A DEFINITION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Christian education is the process of guiding and educating persons toward Christlike changes through an educative and redemptive growth which meets their needs and is based upon relationship experiences with God and a Spirit-imbued community of individuals.

The phrase "the process of guiding and educating persons toward Christlike changes" defines Christian education in terms of a process, not a collection of isolated events from the wholeness

of life. It guides and educates, never dictates or indoctrinates, to the end that persons may experience changes that transform their personal lives in greater likeness to that of Christ. If we attempt to educate for any purpose other than that of bringing God and man together through changes that make man more responsive to God and obligated toward his brothers-in-Christ, our vision is short of its highest potential. The phrase "through an educative and redemptive growth which meets their needs" is a part of the Christlike changes that make man responsive to God. Among man's needs, the greatest is for God. This need above all others must be nurtured and allowed to develop. This can be done effectively only in an educative and redemptive growth pattern. If it is not redemptive, God is eliminated and the educative process is reduced to a secular level that is too anemic to produce changes in personality which fulfill man's God-given destiny. The phrase, "is based upon relationship experiences with God and a Spirit-imbued community of individuals," indicates that all Christian growth comes as a result of experiences in which persons live responsively to God as part of a group so alive to God that the Holy Spirit operates freely in their midst. This is the base upon which Christian education rests; this is what gives Christian education its power and its victory.

The theology underlying this definition is transcendent; for God is believed to be above people, acting as purposer and judge. Man can be redeemed only as he rises above self and finds transforming encounters with God, the only source of redemption. Its theology is immanent in that God does express his initiative toward a responsive individual or group and does become revealed in life through the works of the Holy Spirit, which in the final analysis is God at work in all his nearness to man.

This definition centers in a philosophy that is moderate. It seeks to stop the pendulum before it reaches the radical extremes of humanism on the one side and deism (stressing a



wholly transcendent God) on the other. It supports a reasonable belief in God's immanence, though it seeks to avoid an over-emphasis on this aspect to the hurt of God's transcendency. God's immanence must not be ignored, for God is in his world. Nevin C. Harner helps to clarify the point when he states, "If God is indeed the 'wholly Other,' if he is so far above this world that he cannot be discerned in the world, if what goes on in the homes and the communities and the fellowships which dot this planet has no real part in God's will and plan, then Christian education as we have known it in America is chiefly an illusion."<sup>1</sup> Christian education must not delete God or man from the world scene. Christian education must acknowledge that God is above and at the same time relevant and available to people who respond to his presence and revelation. It must be careful not to lose or obscure God in his immanence by making man God or reducing God to humanistic proportions. God must be a cooperative sovereign Lord who is open to society in his inspiration and revelation.

This definition of Christian education admits that much of the criticism leveled at Social-Liberal views is correct; but it refuses to draw God out of his world, reducing that world to a godless desert. Christian education of the Social-Liberal variety has lost in part its sense of balance: it has allowed man to become overconfident, too trustful in his own creative goodness, nonresponsive to his sinfulness, and satisfied with occasional worship experiences. Yet equally inadequate is a total transcendency of God that is certain to break all relevancy with life. God is above man; yet God is still in his world, redeeming it to Christlikeness through people who are responsive.

This definition is based on the belief that Christian growth comes through laws of learning that are geared to human nature

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<sup>1</sup> Harner, Nevin C., *The Educational Work of the Church* (Abingdon, 1939), p. 23.

by God himself and upon the belief that God uses these laws for communication and development. The definition does not reduce Christian education to a series of educational procedures and techniques without a theology, for an educational philosophy has little to offer Christian education if its communicative experiences and changes are not derived from relationships with God and Christian people in worship, study, fellowship, and service. Significant Christian education occurs when God's presence and the Christian gospel are linked to an educative philosophy that helps bring about personality changes of a Christlike quality and that keeps this quality alive and continuously responsive to God and his revelation.

#### NEW DIMENSIONS OF CONCERN

1. *The Hebraic-Christian Tradition.* The new focus of Christian education is dedicated to the Hebraic-Christian tradition, not to the classical Greek perspective. Christian education has shifted its position from the Greek rationalistic approach to the Hebraic-Christian tradition that emphasizes faith and commitment to a self-disclosing God who reveals himself through nature, history, and personal experience. The reason for this shift is that a God-encounter cannot be realized through a philosophical method. God cannot be sought out by reason, for man does not have the quality nor quantity of intelligence to interpret the mysteries of God. In his use of knowledge, man goes down in defeat. When man accepts the Hebraic approach based upon a response in faith to God and upon a devotion to his will and purpose, he ceases to trust himself and openly commits himself to a Person outside himself for revelation and strength.

2. *Man's Moral Predicament.* The new focus in Christian education is concerned about man's moral predicament. He is caught in a technical world of scientific thought; he is occupied with material things and technical skills, to the neglect of moral and

spiritual discipline within his being. This condition has left him vague and uncertain over purposes, values, and destiny. He is moving toward meaninglessness, inner conflict, and basic frustrations that will tend to call into question all moral and spiritual aspirations. Christian education is now organizing its powers in an effort to turn man from his secular motivations to the realization that the only way out of his dilemma is to seek a Power beyond himself who can give new meanings, values, and a sense of direction to his daily life. Christian educators have come to the conclusion that Christian education cannot function properly if it is indifferent to man's state of lostness. Christian education is seeking to lift the whole man into a Christian perspective under a transcendent God.

3. *Devotion and Commitment to the Eternal God.* The new focus in Christian education demands utter devotion and commitment to the eternal God. Man's escape from moral lostness comes when he gives himself completely to his Father-God, who is his creator, sustainer, and redeemer. God is Reality, the source of all things. To him, man must come; he can find himself in no other way. The new focus in Christian education claims that it is God, not man, who creates and who alone can rescue man from his estrangement; it is God who can transform man into his true stature in God's image. Man's reconciliation comes when his response to God is unconditional: when he comes submitting himself, adding nothing, and withholding nothing. In moments of such devotion, man learns that God gives of himself, not merely propositions or information about himself. God offers himself truly in love, mercy, and forgiveness. When man begins to realize that all creation, especially man, is included in God's purpose of redemption and that God is moving all creation and history toward his full purpose, man begins to see his own futility, to seek the sovereign God, and to share in his redemptive act.

4. *The Church as a Redemptive Community.* The new focus in Christian education insists that the church must be a redemptive community. Much of the work of Christian education is delegated to the church; therefore the church must be true to its New Testament origin of being a community of God's people through which God may release his Spirit and great love. If the church is anything less than a community fully dedicated to the will of God, it is dropping below the purpose of its origin: to continue through its fellowship God's redemptive act. The church must be alive to God; it must function as a godly unit within society, offering opportunities to all individuals for sharing in the events of God's self-disclosure made manifest in their *koinonia*, or fellowship. The church can become the community that Christian education needs by being more than its human equation, by breaking down its worldliness and hypocrisy, and by becoming alive through encounters with God. Such a church will bear witness to the Christian gospel, revitalize the spiritual sensitivity of its fellowship, renew hopes, and become reconciled under the grace of God.

#### BASIC HARMONIES IN THE NEW FOCUS

1. *The Christian Faith and Education.* Christian education in its theological perspective insists upon the unification of the Christian faith and education. One must supplement the other, and both must be given due stress if Christian education is to fulfill its purpose of bringing God and man into a realistic relationship. The Christian faith is based upon certain affirmations such as the belief in a Christlike God, in the Saviorhood of Christ, in the brotherhood of man, and in a way of life that is supported by faith and commitment. The Christian faith is not a mental assent or a mere allegiance to doctrines, moral values, or creeds. It goes far beyond all these until God and his disclosure have been reached and until man finds himself committed and a

participant in the Christian fellowship. The best way for bringing the Christian faith and modern man together is through an educational procedure that utilizes an understanding of human nature, the laws of learning, effective methods, and environmental conditions. When Christian faith and education are united and growing persons are led forward into more and more meaningful channels of response to God through historic and contemporary events of God's revelation, there is true Christian education. To ignore either the Christian faith or the educational procedure is to disrupt Christian education; to wed the two is to assure its effectiveness.

2. *The Teaching-Learning Process and Evangelism.* Effective Christian education must harmonize teaching-learning experiences with evangelism. Without evangelism, the teaching-learning process is like a ship without a rudder; it is lacking in the true purpose and passion of leading persons beyond their humanistic thinking to an object of devotion—God. The teaching-learning process in Christian education needs to be dedicated to the purpose of guiding persons into an encounter with God, into the joy and peace of personal and social fulfillment of self in God, and into a commitment to God's redemptive purpose in history. This is evangelism.

If the teaching-learning process is not geared to the evangelistic purpose, it is inadequate and unworthy of Christian support. If Christian education is not evangelistic in its teaching-learning process, it is promoting nothing more than a moralism. The teaching-learning process and evangelism must not run in competition, nor seek different goals. The new focus is leading Christian education toward evangelistic ends, seeking to help all persons enter into a devoted commitment to the God who confronts them in Christ, in the Bible, and in the Christian community.

3. *Revelation and Content Materials.* In the new focus of Christian education, revelation and content materials are placed



in harmonious relationship. They are united in the sense that content materials for Christian education should be of the type and quality through which the everseeking God may speak, act, and reach individuals who are fulfilling their obligations in response and faith. God's truth and presence must be revealed—this is revelation. Content materials are used for the purpose of imbuing life with the Spirit of God. This places an obligation upon Christian educators in that they must carefully select materials, rejecting all secular and sub-Christian concerns and advocating only materials which are oriented in the Hebraic-Christian tradition. They must advocate the continued usage of these materials in the ongoing experiences of the Christian community. The new focus in Christian education insists that all teaching materials used in the educative process should be biblical and Christian in nature so that they may be instrumental in bringing all persons engaged in the experience to a confrontation with God as he moves through the printed page into their lives and moral predicaments.

4. *God and Growing Persons.* The ideas, feelings, commitments, guilts, and aspirations of people are a vital part of Christian nurture, for God's disclosure must become related to people's needs, capacities, and interests. It is they who do the learning, changing, and responding. Christian education cannot function outside of personal motivations, responses, and dedications. Responses are not ready-made; they cannot be impersonal, nor forced into attitudes and behavior patterns by outside pressure. Christian education must know growing persons so that it can work with their responding natures and can best prepare them for saving and empowering encounters with God.

5. *The "I-Thou" Concept and Christian Fellowship.* Christian education can be weakened if its focus is on the fellowship alone; only when the "I" moves beyond itself to a plane of expression that meets with the "Thou" can man function redemptively in



a permissiveness that helps him in his response and ultimate reconciliation with God. When fellowship contains the Spirit of God and the interaction is both social and godly, the redemptive quality will be so intense that all responsiveness of human nature will be satisfied and conditioned by the impartation of God's Spirit. Such a fellowship becomes a sharing group in the Christian faith, living in the spirit of reconciliation, allowing faith to solve the problem of disunity and to promote a community wherein members find ways of revealing Christian commitment in the affairs of everyday life.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Christian education as restated above has deliberately stressed that God is the glory and the power of all life, thus making all human endeavor valid and victorious only in God. Man has been given a place of importance in this restatement, but has been kept secondary and dependent on God. Man has been viewed as the created, God as the Creator; man as the recipient, God as the Giver; man as the channel, God as the Power. Only in this relationship can education function and keep its balance as it works and becomes a part of two worlds: the divine and the human.

The restatement of Christian education has attempted to keep the educative process in focus and related to a theological purpose. This idea has so far been expressed in general terms only, though later it will be discussed in detail. The attempt will then be made to show how the educational process is necessary as a communicative agency in nurturing man's responsive nature, which is so necessary for a God encounter. Man and God must come to the state of "dialogue," which can be made possible when the educative process becomes the means rather than the end. Christian education thus restated exists in the love, mercy, and judgment of God; in the guidance of man in his educative and redemptive growth, and in the midst of the Christian *koinonia*.

## FIVE / CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

HOW CAN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BE effective if it lacks theological insight as to how God can confront man through Christ, the Bible, and the church? Christian education must maintain an interest in Christian beliefs and their theological basis so that individuals may be guided into an acceptance of the Christian faith.

### THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

The Christian faith centers in a gospel and a way of life that is incarnational, redemptive, and communal. It is made possible by God through Jesus Christ, the Bible, and the Christian church. Such a definition indicates that God has taken the initiative in disclosing himself and in revealing a gospel that is redemptive for all responsive persons. Such persons should not be passive. They need to respond in faith, to grow, to share, and to evaluate their experiences in the light of God's revelation.

Christian faith becomes vital only as God is encountered and as his revelation becomes a relevant part in life's experiences. When man responds to God through any experience imbued by God's presence, especially as revealed in Christ and his church, he increases in insight and faith, feeling and believing that his en-

counter with God has led him into redemptive truth. The Christian faith is more than "being good," or "growing toward maturity acceptable to society." It is based on a relationship and a gospel from God himself that is appropriated by man in Christian experiences.

Christian education must recognize that faith is a living encounter with God and his revelation. Its task is to guide persons so they are able to recognize and respond to God through Christ, biblical events, and the experiences of the ongoing church community; and to help persons to interpret this encounter in all their relations with others. Such an encounter glorifies God, enriches personality, and develops Christian maturity.

### *God*

God may be defined in Christian education as an intelligent, eternal, spiritual Person who is a revealer, creator, and redeemer of life. This definition claims that God is more than an abstraction, a creative process, the unifying but impersonal power of the universe. He is a Person who is both love and judgment. God is one, to whom and through whom all persons responsive to him may find truth, life, and forgiveness through continuing encounters and relationships. In the divine-human encounter, man responds to God and God responds to man's love, loyalty, and compassion. This makes possible a human-divine fellowship that is permissive, creative, and redemptive.

God is both immanent and transcendent in his nature. He is experienced in both nature and history, and at the same time is transcendent above all life and history as creator, purposer, and judge. God is immanent, for he is experienced in the life and teachings of Jesus, in the history of the Christian church, in the ongoing process of creation, and in his unfolding world. He is more than man; he stands over man and all his creation as judge and redeemer.

Essential to Christian education is the idea that God is offering himself, his truth, and his redemption to man. Man is undone, or is in a state of lostness, if he ignores or rebels against this God-invitation. By his nature, God is a seeker of man. Man accepts the divine initiative as a part of his human response. Part of the task of Christian education is to guide man's preparation and growth in recognizing and in responding to the varied revelations, or confrontations, which are ever-immanent in all experiences of God's community of persons.

### *Jesus Christ*

Jesus Christ has been called the God-man. This means that God came into Jesus, the man, and through this incarnation revealed himself to all men with a new understanding and relationship never known to history before. Jesus, the God-man, began acting out in history God's love, judgment, and forgiveness for all mankind. Jesus Christ, by accepting this role, proved that God could enter the human race, that God went all the way to confront man with divine truth, and that the divine and human are both present in man's being. Such an interpretation makes Christ more than "good news about God"; it makes him "the good news." It is God in Jesus that is revealed. This revelation in human flesh helps man to know God and his will, and leads man on into eternal life.

Jesus Christ not only revealed God, he revealed the true nature of man. Man began seeing himself as a spirit made in the image of God. He saw the Christ-deed enacted before him, and he began to realize that he could not fulfill his true nature without opening himself to God and without living in service as a brother to all mankind. Man became confident that eternal life could be his, for Christ had come and had presented God with a perfect means for his confrontation of all life.

Christian education must have a Christology. Without Christ,

Christian education would forfeit the right to use the term Christian. Christ the God-man reveals that God is needed, that man is not sufficient by himself to be victorious over sin, and that man will never fulfill his destiny until sin has been conquered within. Christian educators must see that Christ released new life for all individuals by living and dying in love and devotion to God, truth, and mankind. They must teach the belief that God can be experienced through Jesus the God-man, God's highest revelation.

### *Man*

The basic affirmation regarding man is that God is his creator, sustainer, and redeemer. Man apart from God is without understanding or purpose. If man is a child of God and made in the spiritual image of God, he then is dependent upon God who loves all his earthly creatures. It has been said that God made man for himself and that he is eager that man become a worthy being who grows in the plan and purpose of his creation.

Man has often denied this relationship with God, feeling self-sufficient and prideful over his supposed ability to live successfully. This misplaced loyalty brings sin into his life, for he was made for fellowship with God. Man is not sufficient by himself; he is not his own savior. He is saved from sin by responding to God's love and forgiveness. This dependence on God is essential for man's well-being.

In Romans 3:23 we read: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The interpretation of this passage should not be carried to the point that man is deemed impotent. Man has the capacity for sin, but he also has the capacity for goodness. He may knowingly sin, and knowingly feel the need for God in becoming his best self. Man must respond in faith to God's initiative. Yet he must remember that in all of his efforts, God gives the increase.



Man is morally a free agent. He is completely free to build a life with God or without God. He may submit to any power of his choice or give obedience to gods of his own choosing. His greatest false god will be himself if he turns his trust inwardly and not outwardly to God. It is at this point that Christian education needs to guide man in his free choices so he will follow God's way.

Christian education needs to guide man toward a growing response to God, to cause him to see his helpless state in sin without God, and to show him that he does not know God if he does not feel his own unworthiness and the need of forgiveness. It must convince him that his proper stance is a humble, responding spirit before God. Christian education must stress that estrangement can be overcome in God, and that God is ever seeking to establish a fellowship based on faith and love.

Christian education must guide man not only in being responsive to God but also in releasing into the world the truth of God received in response. The truth of God must be set to work in the midst of all humanity and allowed free expression so that man can be prepared for a life with God through a consecrated community.

### *Sin*

Sin may be defined as a conscious thought or deed that weakens or breaks man's relationship with God. If Christianity is based on a fellowship with God and man, then sin is any deliberate perversion that breaks or weakens that fellowship. A sinner is therefore one who is living unnaturally without a responsive nature to God, trusting in self for life's highest values through a genuine freedom of choice. Personal freedom is essential to sin; there can be no moral quality without personal responsibility. When man violates his own moral judgment, when he goes contrary to what he believes to be the will of God, when he feels he has weak-



ened or broken his personal fellowship with God, he has definitely sinned because he is out of harmony with God and the world of spiritual values.

Sin rests within the bounds of a native self-concern and free moral choices. By nature man tends toward self-expression, self-enjoyment, self-protection, self-preservation, the building of an ego, and the proof of dignity and worth. All this can lead to a feeling of self-sufficiency and independence from God. To avoid this, man needs to be guided into experiences that help him to respond to God and his revelation. This in turn brings man into a fuller, richer life because he has lost himself in God and God's great world. "He who loses his life for my sake will find it," said Jesus.

Sin is propagated by culture as truly as by man's individual choices. Hates, fears, prejudices, selfishness, pride, egoism, independence, and greed are transmitted socially by culture throughout history. Man is part of his culture; by living in it, he shares it with others. Attitudes and the behavior of others influence the emerging growth of individuals as they are stimulated by the dynamics of group life. The quality of the *status quo* influences choices, for what is acceptable to society is determined by many as normally right and to be pursued.

The possibility of sin in man was made by God as definitely as God made the possibility for goodness. This was done not to trap man but in order that man could attain a moral quality of life. If there were no choice open to man, he could have no moral character. When man chooses in the light of a desired consequence between two alternatives, that can be called a moral act. Without the alternatives, he would be determined to a given quality by an outside force apart from his own desires and apart from his own responsible action.

Sin has consequences. The Bible calls sin "death." This is true, for man in sin is out of harmony with God and out of proper

relationships with his world. Since sin destroys fellowship between man and God and also fellowship between individuals, a man alive to sin is living in death, or below the level of abundant life. Man was created to live in God's highest purposes. If man through his free choices seeks a way of life that is independent of God and his creative purposes, he is allowing sin to separate him from life eternal.

### *Salvation*

Salvation is the saving of man from sin through the grace of God made manifest in Jesus Christ. It is victory over attitudes and deeds that separate man from God and man from his brothers. If Christianity is in the main a fellowship with God, sin is a breaking of that fellowship and salvation is the restoration and nurture of that fellowship. Salvation should be thought of in terms of relationships, of a God-direction when man is willing to place God at the center of his life. This implies man's willingness to be empowered and directed by God's revelation and his willingness to live in God's love, mercy, and truth. This obedience, love, service, and fellowship with God make of man a conqueror, for he is able to be a victor over all that would crush and separate him from God and the ongoing spiritual nurture of God's family.

Salvation is a continuous and evergrowing process of hearing and heeding God's call to abundant living in Christ. Salvation is not manifest in a single response to God; it is a growth enjoyed in advancing degrees that makes stronger inner harmony, right human relations, and reconciliation with God. Therefore, salvation is related to an educative process that nurtures and opens man in faith, insight, feelings, and commitment so that his encounters with God will be growing in frequency, strength, and loyalty.

Salvation is not earned, it is a gift of God. Man cannot buy

salvation; nor is it a wage. He cannot obligate God by "good deeds"; God's redeeming love comes out of love. So man can do nothing to force God's hand in his behalf. Salvation comes from the freely given mercy of God, when love meets love. Salvation cannot be realized through hard logical reasoning. Man by his own thinking powers cannot establish a warm, personal relationship. Reason must be accompanied by faith. There must be an outpouring of self in faith and reason Godward. God in his mercy will confront the open and trustful heart.

Salvation is based on repentance. Salvation cannot be realized until a person has seen his sin and is able to go beyond mere regret and sorrow to a decision of turning away from that attitude or act which has brought about a separation from God. Repentance seeks forgiveness that restores the broken fellowship with God and brings a state of confidence and intimacy. Repentance is necessary, for the condition which breaks the fellowship with God is changed through repentance and a new character is created. God, who is love, forgives the sinner and refuses to allow past sins to stand in the way of a new fellowship.

Salvation is spiritual and internal. It deals with man's true intent, with the outreaches of his inner life as he opens his mind and heart in trust to God's mercy, and with forgiveness and love. Salvation gives to life a new dimension, a plus that is of God himself. It is not a remaking of inner resources through a sort of conditioning, making good deeds replace evil ones. God in his purity must enter man through faith and from this can result new harmony, power, and victory.

### *The Kingdom of God*

The kingdom of God can be described as the reign or sovereign rule of God on earth when God's will becomes man's rule for life. To define the kingdom of God is difficult because the term is so inclusive. Jesus likened it to other things and described

it in many ways. He spoke of it in terms of the present as well as of the future. But he never defined it.

The kingdom of God may be interpreted for Christian education purposes in two ways: (1) As proleptically realized, and (2) as realized through an educational process. The first way stresses that the coming kingdom can be anticipatively experienced. It has not come fully, yet its qualities are so demanding that man is to live in the truths of the kingdom now, having faith in God who will give the fullness of the kingdom when his will becomes man's rule of life. Man's part in the kingdom is to live in faith and in response to God as he sees the kingdom way, allowing God and his future gifts to come as God discerns. The second way holds that God's will is done in part in the life of many individuals—this is the kingdom of God, given by God and likened by Jesus to a mustard seed. The will of God in man is small, but it has the possibility of growth toward greater proportions in and through responses to God. The kingdom of God can be likened to such modern terms as democracy and education. A country is called democratic although it is not fully democratic; a person can be called educated even when he is not fully educated. Words can be relative and still be used in a developmental sense.

The educational process can be used to interpret relationally the sayings of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God as found in Mark 4:28: "first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear"; in Mark 4:31, where the kingdom is likened to a grain of mustard seed; and in Matthew 13:33, where the kingdom is compared to the leaven in three measures of meal. These passages indicate the growth process develops in man's present age and moves forward to higher gifts of God. The sayings of Jesus found in Matthew 13:24 regarding the separation of the tares from the wheat, in Matthew 13:47 comparing the kingdom to a net that gathered in fish of all kinds, in Matthew 25:1 regard-

ing the wise and foolish maidens and in Matthew 25:14 concerning the lord and the talents he entrusted to his servants clearly identify the kingdom of God with the coming Day of Judgment, which is future and cataclysmic in nature. The present form of the kingdom, small though it may be, may yet develop into such proportions through man's response to God that the future may usher in its fullness as God's rule becomes man's rule of life.

Both theories of the kingdom of God are legitimate for Christian education. There is a common unity in both as far as man's role is concerned. Man cannot build the kingdom, it is a gift of God. Man can respond to God on earth: he can live in the kingdom's truths as a way of life, fulfilling and developing God's purposes in the church's community. Whether this be called the present kingdom or not, it is living progressively in the will of God, leaving the future to God's wisdom, love, and mercy.

### *The Bible*

The Bible is a record of experiences of the early Hebrews and Christians in their response to God and God's disclosure to them. It is the movement of both God and man in history: it is God revealing himself progressively toward Christ, the God-man, for a full redemption of man; and it is man's interpretation of this God encounter. It is a revelation showing how man has found truth, peace, forgiveness, and life through God.

The Bible is a book written in faith for the purpose of bringing man and God into a redemptive fellowship. It was written to help man hear the voice of God speaking and to see God in love, mercy, and judgment working in the experiences of man and his history. To hear and to see God in the Bible, man must read in faith, emphasizing the larger spiritual content rather than words, single phrases, specific events, or particular descriptions. One should be able to detect and comprehend God's divine



love and activity as they are expressed in the literary and historical experiences and events of the biblical record.

The Bible has proven its worth as an instrument of God through which God may speak to man concerning man's predicaments. The Bible is filled with great themes which are deep concerns of man, such as the cause and source of creation, the scope of providence, the reality of moral judgment, and the possibilities of redemptive love. As man follows the development of these and related themes, he may begin to open himself to God just as the inspired biblical writers did of old. Through these writings he may find himself confronted by God morally and redemptively. In this way the Bible can help to prepare man spiritually so that God may enter his experiences in faith and appreciation.

Before the Bible can be significant to Christian education, Christian educators must apprehend the Bible as being more than a resource book of ethics, as a source of legalistic laws of righteousness, and a partial account of history. They must view the Bible as revelatory and as the means through which God may speak to the experiences of man as man struggles with his loves, fears, hopes, and frustrations.

### *The Christian Church*

The Christian church is a spiritual organism of people operating under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, witnessing to the love and judgment of God in all the relationships of life. The church is more than a group of people united in common concerns of personal and social betterment. The true church is a people of God, God's community. It is a fellowship of people united in one spirit, responding to God and his revelation, proclaiming the gospel, and enjoying a growing faith and commitment to Christ.

The contemporary church must be aware that its very existence is justified in its ability to unify people into a dedication



so sufficient that the Christlike God can live and operate in their lives redemptively. The church must help people respond to God and it must arouse a Christian conscience that can discern and guide people toward love, forgiveness, and service under the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. The church must become effective as a divine "Body of Christ," as a fellowship through which the Holy Spirit may find expression.

The Christian church can easily lose its spiritual dynamic by seeking popularity through exhibitionism; by allowing itself to become a mere psychological cushion and guarantee against fears, worries, and failures; and through proclaiming doctrines, creeds, and beliefs that are popular rather than applying the gospel message to current prejudices and injustices that thwart the free expression of God's love in men's lives. The church must be warned against becoming a social institution that exists sheerly for cultural purposes, promoting an easy security and serving as an outlet of service that is provincial and impractical.

The Christian church can be an instrument of God through which he can reveal, empower, love, and judge people in their relationships to each other and to himself. Before a proper relationship with God can be realized, people must be guided into understanding, appreciating, and interpreting the Christian gospel. They must be guided into an acceptance of the gospel and also into its application to personal and social problems. It is at this point that the gospel becomes meaningful and redemptive by the aid of church activities and relationships.

The purpose of this chapter has been to show that Christian beliefs are necessary for a program of Christian education. The attempt to place Christian beliefs at the heart of Christian education is to show the true purpose of the church and its program, and to help man in his responses to theological reality and truth. Until Christian education includes theological beliefs with-

in its framework and begins to feel a compulsion to accept and to teach in a theological perspective, it will exist on a level below its potential. The task before Christian education is to appropriate a theology that is Christian, relevant, and communicative in nature.

PART 2

THE HUMAN SELF



## SIX / MAN AND HIS PREDICAMENT

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEEDS TO take a long and penetrating look at man. It has been superficial in its more recent examination and interpretation of man, for it has limited itself mainly to seeking insights of man according to psychosocial principles and has neglected the theological implications of his nature. This neglect was deliberate, and Christian educators became antitheological. Many felt that a theological interpretation of human nature was too speculative and was a threat to the Christian educative process of nature. Christian education is now awakening to the fact that man cannot be guided and nurtured in its aims, which are centered in a God-man relationship, without observing man according to his basic nature in a theological perspective. Christian educators are seeing that a theological perspective does not force upon Christian education the acceptance of the total theory of human depravity with all of its undesirable tenets that made man a product of the devil, worthless, and religiously unproductive. The theological perspective has salvaged from the depravity theory the belief that man is not born good or bad but as an individual possessing a growth potentiality both as a child of God and as a sinner. This new theological development of man's nature is finding support

in psychotherapy and in depth psychology. The imperative for Christian education is to look deeply into man, to find his true status, and to discover what qualities may help or hinder his growth toward Christian maturity.

#### NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINE OF MAN

Why should Christian education have a theological doctrine of man?

1. Man shares the heart of Christianity with God. God is ultimate reality, but man's fulfillment is God's greatest concern. Toward this end God had shaped all evolution and is today helping responsive men grow into a greater likeness to his Son. God has placed man in an important role, has equipped him with such potential qualities that he can cooperate with God, and can be used by God to perfect himself, other persons, and his social environment. Therefore, that which is at the heart of God should be at the heart of Christian education; it should be understood thoroughly, and mightily acclaimed.

2. Christian education needs such a doctrine of man before it can guide, teach, and nurture man properly toward God-centered goals. How can Christian education determine the objectives for man's Christian maturity if it does not have a doctrine of man based upon the understanding of what he is and of his basic needs? How can man be led from self-love to a God-love if Christian educators do not understand that man's nature possesses a self-love that may be his undoing? How can Christian education move man from a state of independence to that of dependence upon God if it does not realize that man is inclined to trust self and to seek self-interests? How can Christian education be confident that man is a spiritual being, that he is capable of reasoning, and that he is capable of making moral choices, unless it possesses significant insights into man's nature and his creative God-given potentials? In order that Christian education



may pursue a more secure path in helping man to grow through the love of God into Christian maturity, it must know man; it must understand his nature, upon which his spiritual and sinful responses are based.

3. A theological doctrine of man will reveal clearly man's position in relation to God. The greatest need in present-day Christian education is for a clear understanding of man and of his nature as he stands before his Maker. How does God see man? The Bible, in the Genesis story, reveals that God is the Creator, man is the created; God is the Lord, man is the servant-child; God is the Sustainer, man is the recipient; God discloses, man responds; God seeks man's devotion, man seeks forms of self-love; God seeks man's salvation, man seeks ends that lead to his own undoing. Unless Christian education can come to a more realistic biblical view of man that is less optimistic, it rests upon a perverted foundation.

4. Christian education needs a theological pattern in which all of man's complex drives and needs are synthesized. Man has a complex system that is biological, psychological, sociological, and religious in nature. It produces drives and both felt and unfelt needs. These are constantly demanding expression. In addition, man has numerous outreaches of the self that demand satisfaction for normal balance and growth. When these personality outreaches are frustrated, abnormality occurs and unacceptable mental attitudes and overt behavior often result. The most important of these personality demands are love, worth, and security experienced in relation to both man and God. Since these demands are embedded deeply within man, Christian education must recognize them and provide relationships in the Christian community that will lead to relationships with God.

5. A theological doctrine of man will confront Christian education with the basic reason why man is insecure, confused, and frustrated. Any thoughtful person knows that something is wrong

with man, for man is not at peace within himself; his life is not an expression of beneficent thoughts and deeds toward others. Man realizes that his withdrawal within himself is caused by fears; he is afraid to trust and live in Christian love because he finds himself weak and involved in a ruthless and cruel environment. He feels burdened by anxiety, guilt, and repression which keep him imprisoned and limited to earthly events that fail to support his eternal longings. Man must know why he lives a life of death; he must know the way of release, of forgiveness, of a new direction, and of a full life. These obligations belong to Christian education, for it is its task to lead man to a realization that his estrangement from God is the root of all his ills. Christian education must witness to God's power to free all persons, enabling them to transcend their finiteness, especially their pride and self-love.

6. A theological doctrine of man will help Christian education to keep theology relevant to man's basic nature and needs. Theology must be properly related to man and his world. It must enter his nature, his life situations, his problems, and everything that affects his life. In a theological doctrine of man, ideas are advocated that will help man with his fundamental questions and that are basically theological in nature. These include such questions as who he is, what is his purpose, what is the nature of his world, and what are his obligations toward others. If man can be guided to see himself in God's world and to believe that through a faithful relationship with God he can experience and share in the Christian faith, he is living theologically relevant in his Spirit-imbued environment. When man enters a God relationship, theology enters also, pointing the way to the ultimate goal—the encounter, which gives him adequate insight into his predicament and into the way of sharing in the resources of redemptive Christian fellowship.

Our approach to Christian education will inevitably be af-

fectured by our insights into the nature of man. What, then, is man?

1. Man is a physical, living body, rooted in nature, and subject to nature. His body is made of water, coal, fat, lime, phosphorus, iron, sugar, sulphur, potassium, iodine, and other materials. The body has systems, such as the muscular, nervous, circulatory, glandular, digestive, respiratory, and genitourinary systems. When these work in harmony, they make possible balance, tonicity, and response. Without these physical manifestations of the body, there could be no organism to react, correlate, stimulate, or depress, nor could there be proper bodily responses to environmental stimuli. The body organism should never be reduced in man's thinking to a machine; it is a creative human unit that supports life and furnishes capacities for thinking, choosing, and growing.

2. Man is a psychological being. He is the possessor of a complex system of tendencies and potentialities. Some are acceptable and adaptable; others are undesirable, needing modification, direction, and control. This system produces drives, urges, purposes, and tensions, which are dynamic in nature and which reach out for satisfaction in environmental situations. Psychology has not agreed upon a list of human drives, but the most common ones accepted are: gregariousness, curiosity, pugnacity, mastery, sex expression, creativity, social approval, and protection. These tendencies, or predispositions, create tensions and force man toward self-fulfillment. They soon become patterns of attitudes and expression which formulate possible learning and character. They make it possible for man to be a creature conscious of being a self, equipped with the power to determine outcomes and to transcend his being and environment. Self-consciousness enables man to see himself, to judge himself, and to realize his needs. Self-determination affords man the power to will, to drive forward in the fulfillment of his ideals. Self-trans-

cendency empowers man with the ability to extend himself beyond his finite ways to the realm of spirituality. Without these psychological abilities, Christian education would be impossible. Christian education must afford the guidance that opens man responsively toward God, or it will allow his tendencies to move toward self-centeredness and self-sufficiency.

3. Man is to be interpreted in terms of the social. He is a social being because he has innate gregariousness, a sense of otherness that makes him a person-in-relationship. He is made for fellowship, not for isolation. His normality is social because his nature is receptive. He lives in the influence of others, and he finds growth through influencing people. His nature wants to live for the interpersonal relationships which bring satisfaction and fulfillment to his feelings, goals, and purposes. His nature forces upon him the demand for social situations in which he loves and is loved. Without these two expressions he could never feel secure nor realize the satisfaction of accomplishment and social approval. God, man's Creator, fashioned man as a sharing person whose innate energies emerge only as they are nourished in relationships with individuals and things. Because of man's nature, he should never become egocentric; he should never live in the "I-Me" relationship, but in the "I-Thou" relationship. Man's self-interest and self-pride can lead only to death; life comes as he lives for others.

4. Man is a spiritual being. This claim is made from two sources: the human conscience and the Bible. Man has the power to look at his own conscience and to discern the scriptural teachings concerning his origin and destiny. He learns in this way that he is a child of God, able to transcend his state of finiteness and able to enjoy fellowship with his Creator. Man's spiritual nature is assured when he begins to experience the difference between living independently of God and living dependently upon God. Only in the latter case does he begin to

enjoy freedom from self-centeredness and anxiety and to live more fully in peace and security.

### THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The Christian doctrine of man has significant implications for education.

1. Man is made in the image of God. The Genesis story pictorially states, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). These statements are saying that God created man and that man is God's child. These words from Genesis also mean that man is a worthy creature, made with dignity a little below that of the angels and above that of the world of animals. Man was lifted to this high position for fellowship with God and in order to serve as a ready channel through which God might express himself in his truth and creativeness. Man is honored in having the spiritual means through which he can enter into fellowship with God. The divine image does not make man divine. Yet man does possess a divine capacity for spiritual communion with God, wherein he and God become related in an encounter that vitalizes man's being and floods his spirit with God's redeeming love.

2. Man can deface his God-image. Man, being a free person, can spoil his divine image by choosing to turn toward self rather than to respond openly to God's purposes. It is within the power of man to allow the destructive influences of culture to condition his tendencies toward evil. It is certain that God did not make man free so that he would rebel against his Creator, but he made man free so that man could use his innate tendencies to glorify his Maker. But man from his very beginning has used his power of assertiveness to God's sorrow. Man has sought to preserve and to protect self from outside tensions by binding all that he is to himself. It is at this point that man soon realizes he is a slave. When man feeds on himself, creates and trusts his own



values, and lives for selfish goals, he is defacing his God-image, and soon he will begin dying unto God.

3. Man is a sinner. When man is measured by the standards of God and of Jesus Christ, he falls short of the glory of God. The reason that man is a sinner is found in his native tendency toward self-love. Though necessary for his development as a human being, this tendency gets out of control, and man uses this self-love to bind himself to self-centeredness. Some persons believe man's sin and rebellion come from his innate anxiety and depravity, which turn him toward self-pride and thus to rebellion against God. Regardless of the origin of self-love, it is man's undoing, for it thwarts the fulfilling of his fuller potentiality in God.

Yet sin cannot completely destroy man's God-given potentiality. Man can be redirected toward God when his will becomes responsive. Even when man sporadically responds to God in moments of goodness, he is still thought to be a sinner, for he falls short of a God-dependence.

4. God alone can break man's predicament. Man cannot save himself. He lacks the wisdom and the power to forgive and to break his own bonds of self-love and estrangement toward God. The power that binds him will not allow him to admit that self-bondage is wrong, or to feel guilty of sin. He stands helpless in the spiritual tensions created by the self that knows itself to be both a child of God and a sinner. He is pulled toward God; he is drawn to self. Only God can break this predicament; only God can release man. God's way unifies man and carries him to his true destiny. When man sees himself in relationship to God, he sees himself as a sinner. He knows himself to be moving in the wrong direction and feels the guilt of personal estrangement from God. Then in such a state of conviction, he becomes dependent upon God, breaking the bondage of self-love.



5. Man is free to choose whom he will serve. Man has freedom in determining the source of his allegiance. He is free to turn to God or to turn toward self. He is free to be dependent or independent of God. This freedom operates under stress, for both his "divine image" and his "self-image" are demanding loyalty. In this serious situation, man often chooses self because his insights are inadequate and are conditioned by self-interests. Unless God is brought into man's freedom of choice, man is doomed to self-destruction.

#### WHAT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION SHOULD STRESS

1. Man is a bundle of potentialities in conflict. Man is no longer interpreted as a human creature at peace with himself, with his God, and with his world of values. He is seen to exist in the midst of tensions, which vie with each other for the mastery of his life. He is bound to the potentiality of love and hate, dependence and independence, subjective love and objective love. This means that Christian education must stress the variability of man's tendencies. If Christian education is to help man in his tensioned life, it must provide opportunities and experiences that will open man's selfhood to God and to others and that will strengthen the tendencies for good and weaken those tendencies toward pride in self. In this way man will be redirected from a growth toward sin to a growth toward God's purposes.

2. Man is a being of great potentiality ready for release. Man has potential power of worth and of dignity. Potentially he possesses the attributes for Christian fellowship and virtue. His human potentiality needs to be released and nurtured. Only God can give the proper release. Christian education should help men to see that true nurture comes as man commits himself to God's holy will. Man can become fully human and can live up to his highest God-given potentiality, but only as he becomes respon-

sive to God. If man's response is self-promoted to the exclusion of God, he will become something less than man and will exist upon a level below the destiny intended by his Maker.

3. Man is both free and restricted. Man is free to commit himself to any goal, authority, or way of life. He is free to depend upon himself or to depend upon God, as he sees fit. He is free to live in God's holy presence or to deny it. Along with this freedom, man must recognize that he is also restricted. He must acknowledge that God is his Lord, that he is a product of God's will, and that he is destined by God to holy ways. If he is to live a fully normal life, he must live it in God and according to God's revelation. It has been determined by God that man cannot live exclusively for himself or in himself, for in that state he dies in spirit. It has been determined that he is incapable of releasing his full potentiality and that his full stature can be achieved only through a commitment to God. The tragedy of man is that he neglects to heed these facts. He tends to make himself his determiner and to formulate his own destiny, rather than being eager and willing to engage in God's direction and power.

4. Man's worth comes through relationships. Man is so created that he takes on worth through relationships and decreases in worth as he lives in self. Christian education needs to realize that man begins to live when he becomes meaningfully related to others, especially to God. Christian education must help man to increase his appreciation of others and, above all, to God so that these relationships will be a vital part of his life, motivating him to live in a cooperative, loving, and forgiving way. In these relationships, man is able to see himself as he is and to realize his selfishness and his estrangement. He is then in a position to understand and know the worth of others. He can discern what is possible for his own life; and he can understand what is possible when all persons are united and when they share in the same purposes and spirit of dedication. Man's greatest need is

to feel that he will be worthfully related to God and, through God, responsive to others.

5. Man's environmental forces are important. Environmental forces may be positive and assist man in his spiritual growth toward God, or they may be so enticing and glamorous that man makes idols of them, bowing before them, rendering devotion to them, and surrendering his soul to them. Such forces can grow in power and quickly control man's mind and will. All of man's spiritual power and dependence upon God may be usurped, and the supposedly harmless idolatries can exert such power that they enslave man's whole being. Christian education must help to keep man's relationship to God strong and living so that environmental forces will lack the power to threaten God's place in man's life. Environmental forces will take their proper secondary position if God is allowed a central place in man's devotion.

6. Man can transcend himself and fulfill his proper role. In man's creation, God gave to man the ability to think and to reason about eternal things, to rise above his flesh and his finiteness, and to feed upon the spiritual food of God's revelation and presence. This is man's proper role assigned to him by God. Man is therefore able to live above his own finite, sordid, earthly existence and is able to enjoy God's fellowship and eternal truth. Man's greatest hope is that he can transcend himself, can judge himself, can become dissatisfied with himself, and can live according to God's will. This fact needs to be stressed by Christian education: man is not determined to live in a self-centered world filled with conflicts and anxieties; he can live in a world that includes God and is filled with radiant life.

7. God is the answer to man's predicament. Man has a protecting and unifying factor in his nature which seeks to organize and to direct all goals toward the preservation of self. As this process grows in inward strength, it builds a "second nature"

which keeps man centered in longings and tends to bind his highest intentions to himself. This makes him become dependent upon self and independent of God. This tendency toward self comes in conflict with his "God-image" that pulls him toward God. Man is thus caught in a spiritual tension that threatens to pervert his goodness. How can he be released from this pressure? Man's release is in the pattern and will of God, for when he becomes dependent upon God, self-trust decreases. Christian education's main task is to help man to realize his true status of need and to believe that God's life-giving love, mercy, and forgiveness will provide an abundant life.

## SEVEN / THE HUMAN SELF AS A LEARNER

THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR MUST BE concerned about man as a learner, about how he can be guided into learning responses that will help him to understand his need of relationships with God and his fellows. Unless learning is stressed in Christian education, the small child is almost certain to grow toward confusion and self-trust rather than realizing his dependent relationship to his Maker. God created man as a learner, thereby placing a heavy responsibility upon educators to guide persons toward their God-given destiny.

### WHAT IS LEARNING?

Learning is an inward response to an encountered situation which creates or changes one's personal pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting. Learning has been defined simply as "changes in personality." A person has "changed" when he becomes "different." When something new has been added or rejected in thought, feeling, and acting, he has learned. In order to explain this definition further, certain characteristics of learning are cited below.

1. Learning is both personal and internal. It belongs to a personal interest, reason, and judgment; it is bound to a personal

acceptance of new insights, inclinations, and purposes; it is empowered by new sources, which result in an enlarged personality, new commitments and patterns of living. A person has learned when he begins living and acting out in thought and behavior that which he feels while under compulsion. Learning is internal; it refuses to be externalized by being organized in the minds of others and forced upon a person. Learning in its strictest sense is always self-learning. It is a possession of a particular person. He may be inspired, challenged, and helped by both God and man, but what he learns belongs to him and is the result of his own inner personal responses. Christian educators must realize that the Christian gospel must be nurtured in the inner core of man's personal being; man cannot be receptive to divine truth unless the response comes from his own mind and heart.

2. Learning is responsive in nature. Man's nature is ready to act by passing energy impulses over many neurological pathways to the brain. It is here that learning occurs, for these electrochemical waves are interpreted, coordinated, and recorded in the cerebral cortex. The brain then redirects the nerve impulses back down the spinal cord to the motor organs and into expression. When specific stages of growth have been reached, certain responses are possible and await satisfactory stimuli that promote learning situations. When a situation promotes proper responses by bringing forward meaning and satisfaction, learning has occurred. To fortify this aspect of learning, Christian educators must be conscious of the important role that responses play in learning. They must seek to provide opportunities which will afford interest and relevancy, thus motivating the learner toward enduring commitments and devotion.

3. Learning is purposeful. Learning comes easily and naturally when that which is to be learned has relevant value, worth, and purpose for the learner. Since learning is personal, inter-



nal, and responsive in nature, the learner must be motivated and attracted so that he will want to learn, enjoy, and use the purposeful resources that are possible. Purpose in learning will vary according to each age group; therefore careful thought must be used by teachers in selecting learning-teaching situations in this wide variation of age-group purposes, for some content and activity may be above or below the learner's sense of worth and relevancy. If personal interest is not evoked and if there is no appeal to the high purposes of an individual, learning will be nominal simply because the learner has not been sufficiently motivated and challenged. Christian educators must see that Christian purposes, and especially the purpose of encountering God and his revelation, are the most appealing and motivating powers of learning known to man.

4. Learning is life-changing. Learning is dynamic in life because it is purposeful. It is not something meaningless or mechanical that passes through or acts upon a life, leaving it in its former state. When learning has occurred, life is changed. Life cannot be the same, for new interests, concerns, purposes, and commitments arise that demand consideration and action. When new learning becomes central and gains the position of a ruling principle, the old philosophy of life gives way and is modified so that life as a unit becomes more harmonious. Because learning is life-changing, in that it is constantly formulating and establishing a master principle or governing objectives around which a person is oriented, Christian educators must pursue learning as the means of releasing the self from selfish drives, colliding interests, confusion, and conflicts and employ it for the purpose of guiding the learner into the controlling interest of serving God.

5. Learning is a lifelong process. It is continuous; it never ceases; it is a process of connective responses, never a sum of isolated events. Learning is such because life is dynamic and

everchanging. Learning and life are thus coterminous in the same process. The fundamental law of life is adjustment and learning is an essential part of this endeavor. As long as life seeks adjustment, learning will be needed in this creative task. Life moves from the undeveloped to the developed, from the ignorant to the enlightened, and it uses learning as a part of this creation and completion. Learning is an ever-present concern; there is never a period in life when learning is not important. The idea that learning is for children and youth but not for adults is antiquated. Adults must continue to learn if life is to be satisfactory and productive. This lifelong process of learning is an important part of Christian education, and educators should strive to promote a gradual and increasing process of learning for all age levels.

6. Learning can and must be God-centered. God and learning belong together since learning is growth and development and since God is the creator of this learning-growth process. God created man's ability to learn, to understand, and to grow in his revealed truth so that man could be enriched and made aware of his need of God. Man becomes more conscious of God through learning, and in the learning process he is more acceptable to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To take God out of the learning process is to reduce learning to a system of guidance based upon man's discovery of ideas and activities that he finds satisfactory and desirable. To put God at the center of learning is to accept the idea that truth comes from God and that learning helps individuals to be receptive to God's disclosures. Christian education must accept the idea expressed in 1 Corinthians 3:6: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."

#### THE THREE ROLES IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

Success in learning depends upon three important factors: the role of God, the role of the teacher, and the role of the learner. To leave any one of these roles out of the learning process is to

unbalance and make uncertain the desired objectives. Christian education must unite these three roles into a creative whole, giving due stress to each.

1. *God's Role.* God is to be deemed the Creator; man must believe that God is Supreme Reality. From God's creative self, man came into being equipped to grow toward acceptable goals. This ability to learn is God-given; the drives and passions of man belong to man himself, but they are instigated by God for man's soul so that he may mature toward exalting purposes. God also gave man the ability through learning capacities to live in continuity; man is able to accept all forces that fulfill the truths of God and to expel the forces that disclaim and disorganize God's truths. Even though God has been gracious to man in equipping him for learning, man alone may not direct his capacities and skills toward the transcendent world of truth. The responsibility of the direction of the individual's potentiality rests upon the teacher and the learner. God has provided competency in the learning process; now it is up to man to use properly that which God has provided. Christian educators should reverently acclaim God's creative role in the learning process and help the learner to feel committed in the sharing of God's resources that are given to him in love and confidence.

2. *The Teacher's Role.* A person becomes a teacher in Christian education when he is a guide, counselor, friend, and channel of God's grace to others. The teacher must not assume a "holier-than-thou" attitude; he should be basically Christian, humble, and natural. A person is truly a teacher when he can communicate humbly the gospel, when he can help students to respond in love and trust to God and human associates, and when he can guide the sharing of Christian living. A teacher's responsibility is to share common Christian objectives and to stimulate students in their responses toward aims that are relevant to the gospel and Christian growth. At the same time a

teacher must be concerned with group sharing and with resources and methods which help to relate Christian content with human needs.

A teacher cannot escape holding certain convictions and personal feelings on controversial issues. He has a right to express his deep feelings, but not in a way that excludes the opinions and convictions of others. He must be so friendly and approachable that students will feel free to speak and to react without teacher condemnation. It is within this democratic rapport that students think, feel deeply, and become more open to the redemptive work of God. In such an atmosphere, the class as a whole can evaluate all hypotheses and arrive at conclusions that have personal meaning. A domineering teacher closes minds and forces the acceptance of traditional answers. A free exchange of ideas is necessary. Yet there needs to be Christian guidance, for such thinking can wander into irrelevancies and sub-Christian conclusions. Free thinking should be guided by the teacher into historical and biblical sources and truths so that students may see the Bible as God's revelation spoken in history but relevant to all contemporary life. A class session cannot be productive unless the teacher is dedicated to his task and willing to plan his teaching so that the learning process may be a true channel for God's revelation.

3. *The Learner's Role.* The learner must accept the role of response, of appropriating new ideas, attitudes, and skills for Christian living. It is through the learner's "outreaches" and "intakes" that he learns. Changes in thought, feeling, and action cannot be coerced by another; only the learner can open himself to such changes. Learning therefore is internal and is based upon motivation that opens the learner to God and the Christian gospel. If the learner does not feel an inner urge to respond, if what he is to learn seems worthless and unrelated to the framework of his living, if it is not within his mental capacity, then all

talk and threats will not make him engage in the learning process. The learner must assume the role of participation, of being more than an observer or a passive creature who absorbs; he must engage freely and openly in situations and relationships that contain interest, meaning, and purpose. A learner cannot give mere lip service to Christian truth; he must be changed by it to the extent that he lives it. He must not neglect the role of a thinker; he must thoughtfully face his life with its problematic situations, concerns, and inconsistencies so that he is able to make decisions that carry worth and importance. His own mental struggles will be more productive than the verbal deliberations of a teacher. His thinking process, however, must be guided by Christian goals and faith. His sensations, perceptions, and insights should not become ends in themselves but should lead to an overall orientation in Christian living.

#### THE LAWS OF LEARNING<sup>1</sup>

Learning recognizes the bounds of law and order. Learning is an internal process connected to the laws of maturation and personality development. Since learning deals with inner feelings and responses, it cannot be externally determined or imposed; it must follow a definite order ascribed by the needs and demands of man's partially determined self-processes. Below are given some of the outstanding laws of learning that should help to guide the methods by which Christian education does its work.

1. *The Law of Developmental Readiness.* Readiness of personality is physical, mental, social, volitional, and emotional. A student is ready when he wills toward an idea, when he begins to throw out lead tendencies toward greater understanding, and when he becomes stimulated and is driven by strong purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward L. Thorndike's laws of learning of readiness, effect, use and disuse are acknowledged.



In this state, his self is moving outward for satisfaction; in this outreach he vigorously pursues that which seems worthwhile in each learning opportunity. So learning, under this law, proceeds on the basis of gradation, for each individual will vary from other individuals and each group from other groups. Each learner has his own rate of growth and his own needs in varied stages of development. If learning comes naturally, it must confront and encompass the individual's interests, capacities, and outreaches.

2. *The Law of Repeated and Connectional Responses.* Learning is strengthened when a response is repeated. Each time a response is repeated, that response comes with more ease and with greater insight. When a response is not repeated, the response quickly loses its power. When a learning experience is repeated, it soon makes impressed neurological pathways to the brain, and this helps to establish control and stability for desired outcomes. Repetition brings habits into being. These are to be encouraged in learning, for they help the student to stabilize his Christian responses without reverting continuously to initial situations.

3. *The Law of Motivation and Purpose.* Learning that comes naturally to an individual comes as a result of interest, attention, curiosity, excitement, and an imminent purpose. Learning must be felt; it must have sufficient worth and challenge to cause an inner reaction that forces the individual into an involvement. If there is no inner compulsion, aliveness, and sensitivity toward what is to be learned, the teacher's efforts will be useless or of only nominal value. The strength of purpose is deeply embedded in learning. If a learner feels that the goals and rewards of a learning situation are valid and are an essential part of happy and useful life, nothing can stop his learning attempts. His inner fortitude forces his learning efforts. If the learner feels that the results of a learning situation are immature, childish, and worthless, then all the encouragement or threats by the teacher can never create the proper incentive for learning. The learner's evaluation

will be made on the basis of his own values, not on the basis of another person's sense of values.

4. *The Law of Satisfactory Achievement.* A sense of success is an integral part of learning. The learner must achieve a sense of satisfaction in his ability to learn, and he must enjoy the results of self-fulfillment before he will commit himself purposefully to learning that demands expenditure of time and effort. The learner has the urge to excel and to become someone of worth. If this urge is frustrated, he will adopt a passive pattern and will avoid many of the social demands placed upon him by developing an inferiority complex. His activity will be limited and directed toward that which he can do successfully. If learning is placed upon a graded basis and is within the interests, capacities, and skills of the learner, he is almost certain to achieve a measure of success and pleasure. He will thus experience confidence and assurance in his educative efforts. When learning has no such satisfactory and motivating basis, it is very likely that the learner will be thwarted, discouraged, and forced into a self-centered refuge.

5. *The Law of Environmental Conditioning.* Environment conditions the learner; it furnishes him with the stimuli that draw forth his responses. The learner customarily reflects the quality of his environment. Because of this fact, he should be nurtured in the environment and fellowship of Christian relationships that are imbued with Christian values. The church's social environment should be planned and organized in greater degrees around the teachings of the gospel so that the fellowship will be contagiously Christian. The physical environment should radiate beauty and create personal pride in each learner. The functional facilities should be adequate for learning and for influencing internal feelings and responses. Learning is not confined to the planned and the organized; it belongs also to the indirect and incidental by-products of the learner's wider environment,

which may be attractive and motivating without being Christian. The task before Christian education is to include more of the learner's total environment and to infuse it with the spirit and teachings of Jesus so that it may become a channel of God's grace.

### HOW ARE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTS LEARNED?

Christian concepts are built; they are not ready-made and given to a learner by another. A concept is a mental form, an impression, in which the human mind finds distinct meaning. If there is no meaning, there is no concept, regardless of the time and effort on the part of others to relate facts, verbal definitions, and descriptions. Unless the student has a growing foundation of meanings that proceed from specifics to general principles, he can never appropriate the concepts he needs in actual Christian living. Concepts, or ideas, are learned on a graded basis. The nursery child, because of the lack of advanced reasoning ability, is forced to rely on his feelings and unorganized experiences in his concept building. Later the mental ability increases and the student is able to organize objects into classifications and to know their functions. As this ability increases through passing years, the learner begins to reason abstractly and philosophically. This leads to more mature concepts organized into greater coherence.

Christian education must accept the fact that concepts have a crude beginning. Such a beginning is nevertheless important because it is the foundation upon which future meanings and relationships depend. If a learner has been led initially into building false concepts, his conclusions will be faulty as he reaches a more mature age. When a person's idea of Christianity contains mostly the feeling of restraint and deprivation in the formative years, later concepts of Christianity will never reach the mature meaning of abundant living, joy, peace, and victory.

1. *Learning the Concept of God.* The concept of God begins for an infant in the love and awe of his parents and later has

reference to other loving persons. In time his concept increases in scope to include most of the happy and mystery-filled experiences that come from the feeling of security in a dependable world and from loving people. It is through these experiences that the individual encounters God. If the child is a part of the church community, he will hear references made to God and he will see persons pray, hear them sing, and watch them share in reverent and happy relationships. These means will seem to him to be wonderful and good. Thus he will be led personally to share in his own way in these relationships, understanding and appreciating more of God as he advances. During the primary and junior years, the child will begin responding to the deeper mysteries of nature and to the love and goodness of God. Soon he will begin to sense the judgment of God as he becomes conscious of justice and injustice in his life and in the lives of people around him. As he becomes especially sensitive to goodness, beauty, and kindness, he will associate these feelings with God. As the child becomes a youth, he begins to experience God in terms of relationships that often include a conversion experience or a decision to accept God's grace more fully and to live more devotedly in God's community of believers. As his concepts continue to grow, his adult understanding will encompass more of the total redemptive act of God and of his constant need of divine love and forgiveness. As he attains the capacity for theological thought, he should discover that God becomes more real and more relevant to his life.

2. *Learning the Concept of Jesus.* The beginning of a child's concept of Jesus is limited to the simple ideals of Jesus incorporated into the lives of his close associates and his parents. During this preschool period, a child may be advanced to the point of simple stories about the baby Jesus. Usually these stories will be the extent of his interest and ready response. In the primary age, Jesus as a boy may be presented. This presentation may be



extended during the junior age to call forth an appreciation of Jesus' strong and good character. Throughout the entire childhood period, Jesus should be introduced as a good and kind person who loved God and children and who is worthy of personal love and devotion. During the individual's years as a youth, he should grow in his understanding of Jesus as Savior and as the Christ. He should feel Jesus to be a needed part of everyone's life. He should begin to see God's relationship to Jesus, to see God in Jesus as Savior, and to understand Jesus as the revelation of God in history. This idea of Jesus will continue into his adult life, bringing stability of Christian character.

3. *Learning the Concept of the Bible.* The Bible is an adult book written in the concepts and words of adults. A child must be guided carefully in establishing a foundation for future biblical truths. The nursery child should be introduced to the Bible by allowing him to see it, feel it, hear about it. It should not be read in its adult form, but its ideals and principles should be included in the nursery curriculum in a way that will be understandable and relevant to nursery life. In the kindergarten age, story books based on the Bible may be used. These tell simple stories about biblical characters and are written in language suitable to the kindergarten age level. During the primary age, Bible stories should be told and Old Testament times and customs explored. Selected Bible verses may be used and interpreted. The junior period adds to this early foundation hero stories and some historical background to the Bible which will help the student to see in part the Bible make-up. The youth age permits the understanding of the Bible as history and a growing understanding of the truths of God's revelation. The adult age will emphasize the gospel story which reveals God's search for man and man's response to God.

4. *Learning the Concept of Prayer.* The prayer concept begins in the attitudes and practices of a Christian family that prays

and has fellowship with God. The nursery child who observes and bows his head when his father or mother prays, is being led into an understanding of prayer and of its importance even before he understands all the words. The "thank you, God" prayers in the home and church are the early beginning which later leads to more spontaneous prayers. A nursery child's prayer is mostly an outreach toward the good, the beautiful, and the lovely, which quickly become associated with God. The kindergarten child still expresses the "thank you, God" prayers, but his prayers are more expansive and include much of the beautiful in his growing life. He shows a tendency to "talk to God" in conversation about daily life, centering on the joys and wonders of his happy experiences. In the primary age, prayers will include the topics of goodness and thankfulness. Junior children pray for guidance and show gratitude for their awareness of God and for his constant help in courageous living. The prayer life of youth is deeply rooted in commitment to God, to Christ, and to the church. Feelings, aspirations, and objectives are freely expressed to God. In these ways, young people show that they are responsive to a God-consciousness in an everwidening world. These youthful concerns are carried over into adulthood when they are enlarged to center in the glorification of God for God's sake. Through prayer, the adult seeks help in yielding self to a full commitment to God's perfect will for all mankind.

5. *Learning the Concept of the Church.* The concept that embodies the church as a "fellowship of saints," the "body of Christ," or the "family of God" is abstract. It needs to be amplified from simple beginnings. The nursery-age child has a definite place in the church and has the right to think that his class is the church. As soon as a child enters a class group, he begins to sense a "belonging" as he participates in its activities. The sharing of the group's ideas, beliefs, and functions can lead to church loyalty. To the nursery and kindergarten child, the church means



a place of happiness where children come to play, sing, talk about God, thank God for good things, talk about the baby Jesus, and share thoughts about the wonders of nature. Sharing is enjoyable and is the beginning of attitudes and feelings that support a more advanced loyalty and a deeper sense of belonging. Primary and junior children begin to extend their relationships beyond their classes to groups within the larger church. They see the church at work in the home, community and around the world. For youth, the church becomes more connected with the redemptive fellowship in which they and their friends may share. Their growing loyalty and insight into the divine purpose of the church helps to lead them into full membership and commitment to important responsibilities. This loyalty sustained into adulthood leads them to an understanding of the church as a fellowship of believers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, manifesting God's redemptive love and forgiveness.

#### LEARNING MUST HAVE INCENTIVES

Learning must be motivated; it comes best when a learner has been activated to achieve. The cause of learning will vary with individuals. That which will activate one person may leave another unaffected. This variance is caused by individual interests, insights, and needs (both felt and unfelt)—all of which differ in intensity and appeal. The best that an educator can do is to be aware of the group interests, motives, and needs at a particular age level and to base his efforts upon them. He may of course help those individuals who are slow by providing stronger incentives. Many teachers, especially on the local church level, are confused about which incentives are proper to use and which are improper. A brief consideration of this point is given below.

1. *The Legitimate Incentive.* Any incentive for learning that works from the inward-side of a person and that creates inner

springs of action that encourage him in his free will to learn will help to provide motivation that is strong and undying. When a learner has an inward desire to learn—that is, a desire not forced upon him by external pressures—he has reached the highest and strongest motivation known to education. What is the most legitimate incentive which should be used in Christian education? It is an inspiration and challenge to live receptively to God, to love him, to serve his will, and through him to find life abundant in love and service to others. If the incentive is less than this, learning is not motivated to its highest potential and the incentive should not be encouraged in Christian education. All efforts expressed in Christian education should move persons toward a God sensitivity, toward an individual and social need of God's revelation and grace, and toward love and service that will bind persons together in the spirit of Jesus Christ. When persons are moving toward this high purpose in God, they are reaching out for the fullness of life. Christian education must not lower its sights and entice mankind to live on a secondary level by seeking material objects or cheap social satisfaction.

2. *The Illegitimate Incentive.* Any incentive for learning that works from the external-side of a person, that is sought as an end in itself, and that is outside the inward spiritual relationship with God is inadequate for Christian education. Many leaders in Christian education seek to motivate students to learn by using incentives that are competitive in nature. Some try to encourage students to learn through the giving of rewards. But the common practice of dividing the group into two divisions: the reds and the blues, one class against another class, one church against another church, or boys against girls is an unworthy incentive. Likewise is the incentive built upon the desire to possess certain rewards such as pins, badges, emblems, banners, prizes, banquets, parties and trips. Such practices are illegitimate because the enthusiasm seldom penetrates the personality. Winning, los-

ing, receiving become of primary interest and the spiritual goal is secondary. Until Christian education can appeal to the learner in such inward strength that his all-consuming urge is to attain a right relationship to God and to know the grace of God within himself, it has not reached its highest potential or fulfilled its supreme obligation.

### CAN LEARNING BE TRANSFERRED?

The question may be asked: Can learning be transferred from one field to another? If a person is taught to be honest in handling money, will he then be honest in all other areas of human endeavor? If a person can master the difficult and abstract in one field, will he be able to master with equal ease a difficult subject in another field of learning? If a child is taught to tell the truth about acts of childhood, when he becomes an adult will he tell the truth in all areas of mature life? The following two theories are important in answering these questions.

1. Learning can be transferred widely because there is a wide spread of learning over the various fields of learning. Many church school teachers talk about love in the abstract and feel that it will be applied in all specific instances. They believe that if a learner testifies to his love for Christ, he will also testify to his love for members of other races. They believe that if a person is Christian in one phase of living, he will be Christian in all other phases of life. This theory is not psychologically sound, and Christian education is moving away from it because it is not verified by human experience.

2. Learning is transferable when the elements are identical or are closely related. This theory claims that only a small amount of learning is transferable. It follows that Christian education needs to help persons to be responsive in as many specific relationships and concerns as possible. Since only the identical and closely related elements are involved in the transfer of learning,

the scope of learning is limited in its outreach. Therefore new learning is needed as the student passes into wider areas of living. Christian education must be relevant, and it must help a person to learn in a wide scope, including as much of life as can be reasonably managed. As a Christian grows and expands in scope, Christian education must be present to help him to master the growing concepts and areas of needed response.

### HOW CAN CHRISTIAN LEARNING BE ASSURED?

1. Christian learning can be assured through relationships that harmonize Christian theology with an educative procedure. In Christian education, learning must be a distinct type of learning that is permeated with Christian truth. Christian learning is concerned about the relationship between God and man. Before Christian learning can be assured, Christian education must be certain that Christian theology is communicated through a reliable educative procedure that accepts and uses the modern insights of education. Christian truth and the educative procedure are naturally correlative. Their relationship is not strained or forced; they work together without sacrificing or altering the power of either.

2. Christian learning can be assured through Christian decision and commitment. Christian learning comes when a person is involved in the basic attitudes and practices of the Christian faith. Christian learning comes readily when a person begins advancing toward a deeper understanding of God's will. A learner will find it difficult, if not impossible, to realize the Christian spirit from a position outside the interaction of the fellowship which is growing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When a person arrives at the point in his Christian growth that demands a decision for Christ and a commitment to God's will, he will be afforded the needed resources for communicative encounters that will lead him into the more wonderful status of

God's truth. Christian education is dedicated to this evangelistic effort so that individuals through learning and growth will commit their lives to the will of God.

3. Christian learning can be assured through Christian relationships, divine and human. Christian learning, centered in the Christlike God, is interested in a relevant relationship between God and the human race. Christian learning is not dedicated to the memorization and elaboration of abstract thought about God, but to the establishment of a relationship between God and man and between man and man. God reveals his truth only as man becomes responsive and opens himself to God's presence. Christian learning therefore comes out of relationships through which Christian truths have been revealed. The biblical record indicates that God has spoken in the language of relationships when man opened his life to God's presence in living events. So must modern man become related to God before he can discern principles that are Christian.

4. Christian learning can be assured through identification of Christian purposes. One of the outstanding questions in Christian education is: Are the goals and purposes utilized basically Christian? Christian education has often sought purposes below the highest Christian standard. Frequently it has been too anthropocentric and not enough theocentric. It is questionable to assume that learning can be Christian and at the same time be centered in "self-realizing persons" who are more interested in social adjustment than in God's revelation. Christian learning must be identified with the Christian gospel. It must have its source in God. Its chief exemplification must be found in the life of Christ. Learning becomes Christian when it is creatively connected with the Christlike God; it becomes sub-Christian when this connection is severed and it turns to a humanistic or materialistic source. Christian learning must emerge as a response to the creative act of God in history and contemporary life.



5. Christian learning can be assured through sharing the Christian gospel. Learning derives primarily from person-to-person relationships. In this intimate interaction, there is released a power capable of changing ideas, feelings, and action. When this person-to-person sharing is embedded in the Christian gospel and when persons are interacting in love and forgiveness, Christian learning that expresses redemption and fellowship is possible. Unless learning derives from the fertile field of the Christian gospel, it becomes secular in nature and cannot be legitimately called Christian. Christian learning is assured when members of a group begin sharing the gospel with each other. With God's help they then begin clarifying, defining, and evaluating the problems of living. This in turn helps them increase the lines of their communication, deepen their insights, and discover meanings that lead toward Christian maturity.

## EIGHT / THE POTENTIAL SELF IN CHRISTIAN GROWTH

THE SELF LIVES IN A STATE OF POTENTIALITY. It is dynamic and constantly unfolding. Its object is growth. The main interest of Christian education in the subject of growth must be in Christian ideals realized in the Christlike God. Christian education has to be concerned about the growth of the total self: all feelings, motives, actions, philosophy, and orientation of life. Yet the main emphasis is focused upon God and his gospel, for through him all other phases of growth receive their importance. Because growth takes place in relationships of persons, the Divine Person must be encountered if the growth is to be vital, Christian, and redemptive. Christian growth must therefore be theologically oriented in order that the physiological, psychological, and sociological phases of growth may have Christian relevancy.

### WHAT IS CHRISTIAN GROWTH?

Christian growth is the developmental process in personality that advances the person from levels of immaturity to the growing consciousness of God and to a response to God as reflected and mediated through Christ, the Bible, and the Christian community. Growth indicates change. It represents a net gain as the

person begins the process of losing elements of immaturity and gaining those of maturity. Growth always includes some losses, but the final result is a plus.

To make growth "Christian" is the main concern of Christian education. Growth has been instigated by God who has made all life tend toward the expression of some form of growth. The quality and direction of the growth process may be influenced for better or worse, toward the secular or toward the Christian. Christian growth is not a mechanical thing; the powers within a person do not automatically determine Christian results. Growth will become Christian only as the person is motivated to respond to God and to advance in a commitment to Christian truth.

The process of growth is decreed by God; the results of this growth, however, are not decreed by God. There is nothing fore-ordained by God in the human growth process that determines the quality and direction of the growth. Christian growth cannot be realized by waiting for the laws of growth to fulfill themselves. Christian growth is possible only in a faith response to God through Christ and God's self-disclosures. Christian growth is a gift, freely given. Only when man is alive to the divine resources of God is he given the dynamic for achieving his fullest development.

Christian growth is a gift of God. It is realized in relationships with God and with responsive human associates who become channels of God's grace. Christian growth has been determined to the pattern of an "I-Thou." If ever this relationship becomes an "I-It" and if persons refuse to respond to the "Thou," Christian growth is frustrated. When man cuts the channel through which God and his truth are revealed, man becomes thwarted in his growth. If God is forced out into the periphery of man's interests, Christian growth is certain to be thwarted. Words and human effort cannot restore a frustrated life to Christian harmony—this can be done only in obedience and faith to God. If Christian edu-

cation is to prevent the frustration of Christian growth, it must direct each growing life toward God and help it to develop its potentiality in the context and consciousness of God.

### LAWS OF CHRISTIAN GROWTH

What are some of the laws of Christian growth that Christian educators need to recognize as they guide persons into a growing maturity directed by the Holy Spirit?

1. The laws of Christian growth are embedded in the divine purpose of God. God's purpose for man is Christlikeness. God seeks a holy relationship that will permit him to live in man so that man can live in God and enjoy him forever.

2. Christian growth is determined by the interaction of inward Christian potentials and outward Christian stimulation. Christian growth would be impossible if a person did not possess the power within to respond to the presence of God and to be receptive to the stimulation that is environmental and Christian in quality. The coming together of inner and outer forces results in responses, choices, judgments, and commitments. Man and God then move toward a common center. Such interaction results in Christian growth.

3. Christian growth is progressive in nature. Christian growth follows a well-defined path of development; it moves from one stage to another, seeking full expression in each step in order that a foundation for future steps of development can be realized. This principle is expressed by Jesus in his comment regarding the kingdom of God: "first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mark 4:28b). This teaching means that there is a process experienced in maturing, that growth comes in gradations and that it is endowed with certain potentialities at each stage. This stage-by-stage process of Christian growth does not follow an ever-upward path. Christian growth is sporadic. As it advances in its upward climb, it hits plateaus and occasionally

dips and dives. Overall Christian growth, however, shows some advancement in Christlikeness. Its variation makes Christian growth complex and puzzling for Christian educators who seek to guide persons toward Christlike responses to God.

4. Christian growth demands a Christian gospel. Christian growth comes from the Christian gospel, from the witness of what God has done redemptively in Christ Jesus, and not through the purposes, ambitions, and skills of man. Man through rigid discipline can achieve a growing morality, but he cannot grow within himself the grace and glory of God as found in the exemplary life of Jesus Christ. Only as he lives above self and seeks freely the gospel, which is God's way, will he discover Christian qualities in his deepest nature. When man becomes responsive to the gospel message, he can know within himself a power, a grace, a forgiveness, and a restoration that add up to Christian growth.

5. Christian growth demands Christian expression. When a person knows and feels the fruitage of Christian growth he must give witness, just as the early Christians after being filled with the Holy Spirit gave utterance to what God had done through Jesus Christ. Christian expression in turn stimulates further Christian growth. The joy of Christian growth comes at the point of sharing, of responding to others in love and service. Christian expression makes Christian living dynamic and helps to increase one's commitment to God.

#### ESSENTIALS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Four essential elements for Christian growth need to be identified clearly and emphasized.

1. *Responsiveness in Relationship with God.* Only the Christlike God can nurture a Christian, and response to him is necessary. This should be kept constantly before the church and all Christian educators. Unless man becomes responsive to the source



of Christian growth, he will never know the quality of living accomplished in the life of Jesus.

2. *Association with Growing Christians.* Persons who seek Christian growth must share in the company of Christian believers in order to share in the fuller revelation of God. Growing Christians through their association with each other strengthen the bonds of love, help each other to identify the truth of God, encourage one another toward righteousness, condemn that which is sinful, give witness to the saving activity of God, and motivate all to seek God's will and purpose. God uses such a receptive group as a channel for his power and grace. In such a group the Holy Spirit becomes the teacher and the guide. Such association need not be limited to the contemporary scene; it can and must have historical depth. It is possible in Christian fellowship to feel the force of historical lives, especially those that played a formative role in biblical times and in the early Christian church. The revelation that derives from these lives can furnish visions of God which will enable man to unify his life and to serve more effectively in the redemptive fellowship.

3. *Life Adjustments and Climactic Conversions.* Christian growth can be realized only when God is being encountered, when Christ becomes central, and when life is reorganized around the truths of the Christian gospel. When a person dedicates himself to God, he then has the resources for Christian growth. This state can be realized only through a process of adjustments and climactic conversions. Meanings, purposes, and loyalties come as a result of adjustments rather than by one choice. A person will grow in Christ if he continues to adjust his life around the high purposes of a godly perspective. These adjustments usually add up to moments of high devotion, rightly called conversions. Conversions should never be thought of as being one major commitment; conversions take place in a series of high resolves extended to God in loyalty and obedience. Climactic conversions are more

dedicatory in nature than are Christian adjustments. Conversions deal in the realm of yielding and dedicating life to divine authority. Conversions are followed by new births, by man's conscious mental process of discarding the old for the new, by his turning around, and by the changing of the course of his life. New births come after conversions, for it is here that God enters and fills man with his divine grace.

4. *A Life of Witness in a Christian Community.* Christian growth is assured when a person follows through his commitment to God by entering into a Christian community as a field of Christian witness. When man becomes devoted to Christ's way and is willing to assume a servant's role within the Christian fellowship, taking upon himself and sharing in the experiences of the faithful, he reaches the spirit expressed in the *koinonia* of the early church. When a person begins to feel the Christian spirit of the fellowship through sharing in the lives of others, his understanding becomes refined and strengthened. He discovers that his own peace and happiness are closely related to the joy and glory manifest in the lives of others. The more a person becomes involved in Christian witness, the broader become his concepts of the Christian faith. When Christian witness is a part of man's living, he becomes a growing Christian who knows and enjoys the glory of God.

#### CHRISTIAN GROWTH IN AGE GROUPS

Christian growth is expressed in a process that makes its manifestations varied according to the age levels. At each stage, Christian growth has distinct characteristics. These include interests, needs, and capacities which vary according to gradations and yet which are connectional as one moves forward from stage to stage. For example, every growing person has the capacity for worship; but there is a wide difference in the forms of worship that are meaningful to the nursery child and to the adult. Christian

growth varies as it advances toward maturity within an individual. The following represent some of the major stages of growth encountered in church school departments.

1. *The Nursery Group (1-3)*. Christian growth in the nursery group is expressed in terms of relationships with parents and friends. These relationships are foundational because all Christian growth is based upon the feelings of love, security, and dependability that derive from such associations. These relationships are channels through which God's grace is administered. The nursery child grows in Christ's way as he participates in the common events of a Christian family and of his church school class. His life will grow toward the feelings and insights made real through happy and trustworthy associations. In his third year, he will enjoy and develop under more advanced Christian guidance that leads him into simple stories gauged to his understanding. Through these he encounters biblical truths. He likes to sing and express himself through bodily movements. He may be led to express himself in "thank you, God, prayers" for beauty, mystery, and goodness as he approaches the mystery and awe-filled world of God. His growth increases as he shares in simple conversation and asks questions.

2. *The Kindergarten Group (4-5)*. The evidence of Christian growth of the four- and five-year-olds is similar. Children at these ages are affectionate, inquisitive, imaginative, and imitative. They are awakening to the creative powers that give them a sense of personal identity. Their interests are varied but short-lived. Such children are closely tied to parents. They begin to understand the Christian customs and attitudes of parents and to see themselves personally related to the Christian fellowship of parents and close friends. Their appreciation of God and Jesus is being strengthened in these Christian relationships. One of their outstanding elements of growth is the dawning recognition of the consequences of relationships. This helps them to learn how to

be responsive to others, to rules of conduct, and to the joys and punishments that come with cooperate living. They are preparing themselves to be dependent upon God, to obey his ways, and to accept the mystery of his world which they experience in nature, in other persons, and in their own growing ideas. The Bible becomes real to them as God's Book. Simple stories, especially those of babies and children, hold their interest longer when the events of the stories are related to the happenings of their lives. Since their appreciation and understanding cause them to feel that God is good and Jesus is a friend, they are a challenge to all who would guide their growing potentiality into a Christian framework.

3. *The Primary Group* (6-8). Christian growth for this age group is expansive and exciting, for the children from six through eight years old are entering into a wide world of social relations. They have deeper powers of concentration. They are discovering the feelings of personal importance and group acceptance, which are needed for the development of a sense of personal identity and belonging. Their subjectivity is moving rapidly toward objectivity. They are more reflective, inquisitive, and assimilative. They become more involved in ideological problems and in the lives of others. Their thought processes are still fragmentary, and their concentration is short-lived; but their concepts of and their responses to God and Jesus are important. Ethical problems and the idea of death awaken their interest. They are becoming more critical toward the individual self and others; and they are awakening to the contradictions in life. The question of right and wrong looms large in their minds, for they are becoming more related to others and are observing more closely the consequences of human behavior. They find themselves being involved in these consequences. Their insight into right and wrong thrusts them toward God in love. They expect God and Jesus to help them to be good and to help other persons be good. Their

participation in church fellowship helps them to respond to worship and prayer, to the beauty of nature, and to dramatic stories taken from the Bible and the Christian past. They are eager to move beyond fantasy to reality. They enjoy both realms, but now they are better able to distinguish between them. Their consciousness of God and their ready response makes the primary children a joy and challenge to parents and church teachers.

4. *The Junior Group* (9-11). The junior child is often described in terms of the extremes because he is self-assertive and restive in his newly found powers. His growth toward independence is noticeable. Sometimes his actions and words appear antisocial. He is still devoted to his parents, and to close friends mostly of his own sex. His serious moments reveal a growing concern over the needs of people, including those of other nations. He is more critical of self and others; yet those who rise high in worth easily become his heroes. Jesus makes his greatest impact at the point of his good deeds and love for all people. During the later part of this age period, the junior child is capable of extensive creative thinking and of long periods of concentration. This allows the teachers to present many facts, for the junior enjoys seeing Christianity in its historical and geographical perspective. He has deep religious feelings and commitments, but he does not care for pious words. He responds to God in the practical aspects of life, for he is a doer, interested in activity. His greatest Christian growth comes through his group loyalties and participations. His greatest response to God's power is manifested in the Christian fellowship as he enjoys people and becomes interested in their conduct and needs. Outstanding growth comes in his everwidening reach for the biblical, historical, and geographical facts which are closely related to his growing concepts of biblical characters and events.

5. *The Junior High Group* (12-14). This age group lives in the shadows of both maturity and immaturity. They are sensitive



youths who rebel against the childish and enjoy satisfaction when accepted as mature. They discover new powers within themselves and tend to exercise them independently of parental sanctions. They are affectionate, friendly, and cooperative; but they feel, and at times demand, an adult acceptance in spite of their inadequacies and moments of childishness. They seek to prove their maturity by assuming leadership roles and by adopting socially acceptable behavior in groups. Their social life is unstable; it ranges from a distant relationship with the opposite sex to an easy-going relationship with both sexes. Girls at this age are more advanced socially than are boys. The minds of both sexes are alert and questful. This enables them to enjoy new knowledge, to find satisfaction in solving perplexing problems, and to find channels of service. They are not always logical in thought, and their attention is most often directed toward interests of immediate appeal.

The Christian growth of the junior high is exemplified in his readiness to respond to God through a growth conversion or commitment. He is capable of feeling the personal presence of God and of being convicted of sin and wrongdoing. By the age of fourteen, his sense of sin often reaches a surprising height. It declines during his senior high years and rises again during his years as an older youth. To a junior high, God is real as he sees the Bible more clearly as God's revelation in history. In the fellowship of the church, he sees God at work through human interaction.

6. *The Senior High Group (15-17)*. A senior high youth has matured to the state of self-assertiveness, and he finds satisfaction in proving to himself and others his expressive talents. He is socially expansive, enjoying his physical power, bodily stability, and self-confidence—all of which frequently lead him into serious problems. In this personal outreach toward mature behavior, he needs the guidance of understanding parents and

church leaders. His growing social responsibilities and his critical attitudes toward moral and social problems make him a serious person who needs and deeply desires strength and guidance from Christian sources. Since his social life is becoming stronger and he has matured to the "going steady" stage, his Christian convictions and conscience wrestle with such practices as dating habits, sex expressions, and lovemaking. In his self-analysis as to what is Christian and what is sub-Christian, he needs the added confidence and power that can be derived from a sharing relationship with Christians.

Christian growth is especially manifested in his idealistic, open-minded, and adventurous spirit. It is this spirit that forces him to think through the tenets of his Christian faith and to reconsider his previous convictions. He becomes skeptical at times when his new findings promote guilt feelings for breaking away from childhood moorings. With patient guidance he can be led to see the glory of advanced learning that releases him emotionally from uncritical and conflicting beliefs. Christian educators must remember that a senior youth is not a theologian who can handle abstract theology, yet he is quite capable of understanding and appreciating the redemptiveness in Christ and of giving expression to his feelings through commitment to Christ in the fellowship of the church. He is conscious of his sins and guilt feelings and will seek forgiveness in God if the church is vital in its redemptive influences.

7. *The Older Youth Group* (18-21). During the years from eighteen through twenty-one, an older youth reaches physical maturity, the young woman matures often as early as eighteen, while the young man matures slightly later. All the spiritual, psychological, and sociological qualities of the individual are seeking maturity; in fact, the basic needs which have been present from the beginning of the adolescent period are seeking greater maturity. The older youth is greatly concerned over life; he

wants to know how he can fit into it with others and how he can help others to know the successes and joys of a Christian life. He may be in college or working in the world of business. Regardless of his livelihood, he knows he has needs requiring fellowship, proper motivation, and a sharing in common interests of others. He feels the demands of church life which are dedicated to purposeful living under God's command. He wants the church to guide him into this Christian life, yet he will resent and withdraw from any dictatorial pressures or unjust forces the church may seek to enforce. Because he is capable of advanced thinking, he wants the church to recognize his intellectual power and to allow him to use it to enrich all life. He is looking to the church eagerly for social fellowship that will lead eventually to the choosing of a life mate. His Christian growth will reach a high mark when he invests his life more fully in the church's plan of action. Then he will see more completely the church in its true purpose, as the instrument of the Holy Spirit functioning in committed lives. Although he is critical, he is open to Christian truths which are coherent with the teachings of Jesus and which are relevant to his life. He demands that his Christian faith release him from his guilt feelings and his burden of sin. He expects his faith to be able to orientate him around satisfying experiences with God and to open a path of service to others.

8. *The Young Adult Group* (22-39). The age limits of the young adult group are flexible, more determined by responsibilities and marriage status than by chronological age. When a young person takes on the responsibilities of an adult and when his emerging concerns come mostly within the maintenance of family life, he can be classed as a young adult, although he may be in his early twenties. A young adult has reached physical maturity, but he is still growing spiritually and mentally. If he has been properly reared, he will be an independent thinker who

is enthusiastic and realistic in business, church, and community enterprises. The young adult who is single and is forced to live in hotels and boarding houses on a secondary social level, should not be forgotten or neglected by the church. Indeed the church should seek out such persons, for their needs are great. It is within the fundamental needs deriving from the context of business, family life, and community life that a young adult may find his most effective Christian growth. He may live in this state when he associates with other Christians who are seeking greater strength in adjusting to the patterns of responsibilities as parents and community members. Personal and social sins which frustrate Christian outcomes make him sensitive and motivate him toward correction and release through a stronger tie to the Christian church.

9. *The Middle Adult Group* (40-59). The middle adult has lived long enough to find both satisfaction and dissatisfaction in his growing maturity. He enjoys his Christian growth and at the same time is deeply concerned over his immaturity, for his needs, especially his religious ones, lie restless within. He is gregarious and very much in love with people, but he finds it necessary to be selective in social outreaches because domestic obligations demand much of the time which otherwise could be used for socializing. His friends come mainly from his primary relations of business, church, and close neighbors. A high point in his Christian growth is realized at the point of his responsiveness to God, Christ, and to people. In his maturity, he finds satisfaction in theological efforts. These interests cause him to turn seriously to the church for help and guidance. The middle adult group enjoys the honor of being the most church-centered group. They are persons who demand that life be meaningful and adjusted, and who in large numbers have turned to God for guidance.

10. *The Older Adult Group* (60 and older). An older adult is still a candidate for Christian growth. He has ceased growing

physically; in fact, he is in a physical decline that brings with it a deterioration of health and physical handicaps. Although he is moderate in physical living, he enjoys the thrill of new insights and meanings in God, Christ, and the church fellowship. He knows he is in the "sunset stage of life," that physical death is near, and that he has the incentive to seek the eternal in life and the deeper meaning of death's mysteries. He fears that he may be forgotten, or that he will be judged a "has-been." The church can help at this point by answering his need for recognition, for love, and for a sense of belonging that brings security. If the church performs well its redemptive ministry, the older adult will escape cynicism and will grow spiritually optimistic as he faces his future in God's love and care.

#### CHRISTIAN GROWTH IN THE HOME

The home and the church are recognized as being the strongest influences in the nurture of Christian growth. These institutions face a tremendous challenge and a magnificent opportunity, for within their scope lies the sacred task of guiding life toward God's unfolding redemption.

The home is the most influential force in determining the moral and spiritual attributes of young lives. Interest and commitment to Christ normally have their roots in childhood when parents and home experiences testify to Christian truths as the normal procedure of living. Christian homes have, however, varied in their patterns of Christian nurture.

Some homes have followed *the pattern of indoctrination*, through authoritarian means, forcing upon children parental concepts and implanting the feeling that any deviation from this one set pattern is sinful. These parents seldom realize that such a practice will not achieve a Christian maturity that embraces a strong faith and personal commitment to God. Christian faith comes through a person's own free, but guided, thinking, feel-



ing, and willing. If accepted under the coercion of others, undesirable results will follow. A weak substitute will be accepted as the true form of Christianity, proving to the individual that Christianity is anemic and that it holds little relevance to practical living. Rebellion may occur when the mature person analyzes his secondhanded faith and finds it wanting. He may then repudiate all ideas and practices that are connected with Christian discipline.

There are many parents who allow the *laissez-faire* principle to dominate their homelife. They believe that a noninterference approach is the correct method for rearing their children religiously. They reason that religion is a personal matter and that a child should be allowed to choose and believe as he desires without outside interference. They fail to see that a lack of Christian concern on their part interferes with the child's Christian nurture in much the same way as if actual words and definite disciplines were imposed. These parents should realize that children cannot wait for their Christian education, for such is not given at a definite time but is realized in a living process that begins at birth and continues throughout a lifetime. The *laissez-faire* principle does not utilize the time span in which the child does his most influential growing. This produces in the individual a loss of educative time and of readiness of response.

The home that produces the greatest Christian growth for all members is the one that enjoys the presence and practice of God in the normal expression of democratic living. Such a home is an excellent channel through which the living God may find expression. Here all family members, but especially the children, have an opportunity to integrate their lives around a growing Christian faith. In order to achieve this high potentiality, parents must strive to make their home a place where the Christian faith is recognized as being relevant to all problems of family living. In this way, the Christian family can become a family of God.

## CHRISTIAN GROWTH IN THE CHURCH

The church makes its supreme contribution to Christian growth when it is able through Christian nurture to relate a person's life to God and the Christian faith. When a person begins to feel a relevancy between God and the problems of his life and when he begins to grow and enjoy life as interpreted in the gospel of Christ, he has made outstanding strides toward Christian maturity. This type of Christian growth can best be realized when the church begins unifying a person's whole life as expressed in his home, community, and church experiences. Yet the church must go further. It must guide a person's life into deeper insights that bring judgment as well as new interpretation to all attitudes. When the church has inspired believers through worship, study, and service and has given their lives guidance through an educative program, a Christian growth may be realized which will result in a growing dedication to the Christian gospel.

To share in the redemptiveness of the church, every Christian person must realize that he belongs to the church fellowship and that he is a necessary part of the church's function. Christian growth becomes personal through relationships and through participation in the fellowship of believers guided by the Holy Spirit. Many churches mistake mere enthusiasm, character education, or social adjustment for Christian growth. The church can support Christian growth only as it moves into and is sustained by the presence of the self-giving God in the lives of responsive members.

## LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY IN CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Christian growth is dependent upon God, parents, and church leaders to provide guidance and resources that a person needs to respond meaningfully to the Christian gospel. Christian growth needs leadership, for growing persons in their immaturity need

help in the proper identification of Christian sources and goals toward which Christians should move. They need help in their assurance that God is the true source of power which will never be found wanting. They need to know that he is adequate for maintaining Christian peace, security, and strength. They need help in making the gospel effective in human life, so that man's ways will become God's ways. Leaders must therefore accept their responsibility to guide growing persons into the joys of Christian growth.

1. Leadership has the responsibility of connecting Christian growth with its divine source. The most harmful error made by leaders in the promotion of Christian growth is the reliance upon self-powers as the creative source. The only source for Christian growth comes from the Christlike God as his grace enters human life through the workings of the Holy Spirit. Some leaders, because of the lack of insight into what makes an experience Christian, expend much energy and yet limit the Christian potential by assuming that Christian growth comes through achieving an encyclopedic mind which will have at its command a wide source of religious data. Facts, especially those pertaining to the Bible and the church, are necessary; but if they remain ends within themselves, they will fall short of the Christian goal. All information must be a means through which the grace of God can find entrance and expression in personal living.

2. Leadership has the responsibility of helping growing Christians to live a life of faith in the Christian gospel. Without faith, Christian growth is impossible. A person must have loyalty; he must believe so fully in God's guidance that he is willing to respond and act upon the basis of this faith. His faith, his outreach, his assurance, and his expression must radiate from a spiritual dependence upon the holy will of God. Man cannot be divided in his supreme loyalty; he must have faith in the unfolding Christian gospel, in what God is doing redemptively for

mankind. When man becomes faithful to God, allowing God to speak and act through his creation, then man is in his proper stance, ready and open to all that God, his Father, has intended for him, now and for all eternity.

3. Leadership has the responsibility of guiding Christian growth through Christian relationships. Persons grow only in terms of relationships, for it is in this state that a dynamic is established which affects growth. The quality of these relationships will determine the quality of the growth. The sharing of the Christian gospel within the feelings and associations of the Christian community is the ideal means for Christian growth. This spiritual community can never be formed until persons in their interactions share personally and collectively in a relationship to God. It is the power of God that strengthens and supports persons. Only as its members become open to God is it possible for the Christian community to find the strength that is necessary to uphold and propagate Christlike living.

4. Leadership has the responsibility of making Christianity relevant to the total life of believers. Christian growth depends centrally upon the recognition that Christ is the good news. This conviction will never produce Christian growth automatically. But when it becomes translated into the aspirations, judgments, and hopes of human life, it can produce faith, loyalty, and dependence in the soul of man. Growing Christians must know biblical words, but they must also live beyond words in the concrete evidence of the living God as they struggle to survive in human flesh. When God begins sharing in their lives, giving them power to respond to the holy, grace to make real a new birth, and judgment to accept a new orientation, they will know the strength of God and will be enabled to respond more readily to his presence and truth,

Much Christian education suffers for the lack of evaluation. Many teachers and leaders carry on their work, wondering if definite Christian results are being achieved by their labors. They see persons pass from class to class, from one department to another, without feeling confident about the Christian results. The major concerns of Christian growth come in the forms of attitudes, ideals, and moral judgments which do not yield readily to evaluation and measurement.

### THE EVALUATION OF CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Although evaluation of Christian growth is difficult, it is not impossible to find means of evaluation which will bring more sureness to the achievement of Christian aims. Weaknesses in Christian education should be found and corrected rather than ignored and allowed to continue. The educative process should undergo measurement continually in order to help teachers discover means that are conducive to Christian results. Some of the techniques for evaluating Christian growth are the following.

(1) *Observation of Student's Reactions.* The leader may gain information through a critical scrutiny of the student's reaction. If the teacher is integrated within the group process and is accepted by the students, he is in a position to learn much about the quality of thoughts and reactions of his students. Each pupil will reveal his status of Christian maturity through his interest and participation in the thoughts and endeavors of the class. This means that the teacher should observe the way in which a student shares in the devotional life of the group, the way he contributes to the class discussion, the means that seem to inspire his committed witness to Christ, his attendance at group functions, his contribution to steward programs.

(2) *A Continuous Profile Record.* Each student should have a profile record that begins with nursery class and continues through the advancing years. Information concerning personality



changes, devotional habits, intellectual interests, theological questfulness, vocational interests, recreational habits, artistic abilities and interests, social relationships, and zeal for Christian stewardship should be listed in the profile record. As significant changes occur, they should be recorded and studied by leaders involved in the guidance of the person's Christian growth.

(3) *Personal and Group Discussions*. Discussions are most effective for discovering subjective feelings and ideas. There must be a free rapport, however, in class interaction. Persons must feel unafraid in voicing convictions. They must be confident that there will be honest appraisal of all expressed views and attitudes, not humiliating renunciation.

(4) *Conversations with Parents, Public School Teachers, and Community Leaders*. Information from parents, teachers, and community leaders will help to give a rather accurate view of a person's nature, for he is sure to reveal something of his true self, his purposes, and his interests in relationships with them.

(5) *Written Meditations*. This technique is popular in public schools and colleges, and may be used in local churches. Each individual is asked to present in writing his thoughts and feelings on a particular subject. Essay expression is revealing, for the student interprets thoughts which his lips find hard to express. Of course, persons may react to a situation differently on paper than in an actual situation. The paper situation deals with an ideal that is uncomplicated by the pressures of an actual situation. Actual situations, on the other hand, involve personal-social anxieties, fears, and struggles that often force persons to break from their idealistic-religious moorings.

(6) *Standardized Tests*. Tests that are standardized may be used in determining the scope of information possessed by a person and in appraising attitudes in problematic choices of action. Standardized tests cover biblical information, religious ideals, moral judgment, and religious behavior. Because they are stan-

dardized, they give more objectivity to the evaluation. They do not reveal the whole truth, however, for they speak mostly of information and symptoms that need to be linked with other sources capable of depicting more "depth" in personal and group organizational influences.

Christian growth—which includes a person's maturity toward God, society, and himself—should never be left to chance or treated with careless resignation. All leaders who genuinely seek evaluation of their efforts can be assisted to find the means for enlightened judgment. What are some of the cautionary guideposts for leaders in evaluating Christian growth?

» Do not make a decision based on one source of information. Facts should be obtained from many different sources and should cover both statistical information and inner attitudes.

» Be sure the testing is geared properly to the person's maturation and to his personality needs.

» Check to see that the information reflects the true characteristics of the person and is not a function of a mere sporadic mood.

» Be careful that the information is not gathered from isolated facts but derived from a correlated system of Christian insights and actual life expressions.

» Acquire as much skill and judgment as possible in making interpretations of results. False interpretations may be made by the teacher when reading into the evaluation his own feelings and convictions.

PART 3

AIMS AND MEANS



## NINE / THE CHRISTIAN OBJECTIVE

THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS HAVE prepared the way for asking what is the *essential* objective of Christian education. Is this objective forced into an earthbound pattern around the psychological and sociological life of man, or does it guide man beyond the human into the spiritual life of God?

A short time ago some Christian educators seemed to feel that the socio-psycho-moralistic concern of man in his search for wholeness was the chief concern of Christian education. The know-how techniques shared in this emphasis. Today's concern does not belittle or discount the moralistic-methodical aspect of Christian education, but it places its stress on making man's encounter with God the passion of all Christian effort.

Christian education must not return to its inadequate objective of mere character development; it must come to the full realization that man, no matter how important he may be and no matter how good he may want to be, is undone without a vibrant relationship with God. It is in this theological setting that Christian education will find its proper God-given role, will make its greatest contribution, and will be worthy of man's continuous devotion and support.



What is meant by the term "objective"? It is used to indicate the direction, purpose, and desired result of a given endeavor. The word objective expresses that which is sought and expected. When an objective has been formed, a clear and concise goal has emerged that will guide, motivate, and drive toward the cherished ideal. It gives more than direction, for it furnishes the means for evaluation and the means for the realization of progress.

An objective may be interpreted as being the intention that spreads over curriculum, methods, and activities. It draws all content and effort into a unity of purpose and thus prevents the program from becoming segmented. A chief objective will tie together the activities of persons and will give worth to the foundational concerns involved.

Often in Christian education the main purpose is not defined. Instead many objectives share in an equal loyalty, thereby confusing the issue as to the true purpose of Christian education. It needs to be stated that Christian education has one single objective that gives focus and meaning to its program and procedure. The supporting elements of Christian education become vital only when the supreme objective is experienced—God.

Why must the objective be theological in perspective? The objective must be theological because Christian education must pursue the truth, purpose, and destiny of life as revealed in God himself. God is the source of all reality. Life comes from God; it must therefore find expression in him and be nurtured in his fellowship and grace.

Christian educators must realize that man with all his good intentions cannot be saved by Christian education itself—God redeems as people travel the highways of his disclosures open to the Christian educative process. An attempt to find eternal life outside of God is a futile effort, for when man alienates himself from God, he breaks the lifeline and is in danger of spiritual suffocation.

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## WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION?

Christian education has one objective: to guide persons in their responses to the redeeming and life-giving God who seeks and freely gives himself to all who are open and committed to his will and purpose as revealed in the truths of the Christian gospel. God is seeking man and is eager to give of himself. Man's primary obligation is to be responsive and open to the outreach of God. To guide this God-man relationship is the supreme task of Christian education.

Task of  
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To be understandable and useful, this supreme objective of Christian education must be interpreted on the various levels of human development—child, youth, and adult. Responses to God vary according to the interests, needs, and capacities of individuals and groups. It will be necessary therefore to show how each department of the church school sustains this supreme God-centered objective.

Image

1. *In the Nursery Department.* Here the objective is to help the nursery child build foundations upon which he may make simple associations with God through the expressions of his natural life. It may be achieved in the following ways:

» Aid home and church groups to maintain a friendly atmosphere of love, kindness, and understanding, thereby producing the security that is necessary for a feeling of God.

» Assist the child in his moments of response toward beauty, mystery, and the greatness of God's natural world, resulting in building feelings toward God.

» Use play, conversations, pictures, nature objects, songs, prayers, and stories, through which references to God's love and care can be made.

» Use short, simple, well-selected Bible stories in order to refer the child to the Bible and to acquaint him with stories of the baby Jesus.

» Encourage the child to express his feelings, to use his skills, and to ask questions so that the teacher may guide his awakening concerns by directing them toward God.

» Help the child to begin to share and to play cooperatively with other children so that his love for another person will influence his outreach to God.

2. *The Kindergarten Department.* The aim is to help the kindergarten child expand his ideas of God as one who is real, loving, and natural to the world of children. It may be achieved in the following ways:

» Assist the child through informal study and worship to talk to God naturally about life and its problems.

» Speak of Jesus as a friend, as one who loves little children and teaches about God.

» Present the Bible as a book that contains stories about God and Jesus.

» Direct the child's attention to the wonderful world which God created and which is filled with things that express God's love.

» Help the child in living with others, so that he may know God as expressed in the love of his parents, teachers, and friends.

» Lead him in experiencing happy times and a feeling of joy in belonging to God's world and in being God's helper.

3. *The Primary Department.* The objective is to help the primary child advance his personal understanding, appreciation, and devotion to God as creator and father, Jesus as friend and teacher, the Bible as a way of knowing God, and the church as a place where people love and serve God. This may be achieved in the following ways:

» Help the child to appreciate through planned study activities and periods of informal worship the presence of a good and loving God.

» Challenge the child with Jesus' heroic life so that he will want to live like Jesus and to please God.

» Stress the Bible, its times and customs, and help the child to see God's love and care for himself and for people of all times.

» Help the child to learn through his homelife, school life, and church life that God is pleased when life is lived in honesty, kindness, and helpfulness to others.

» Lead the child through group life and through his awakening sensitivity toward goodness to sense God's judgment on injustices in his life and in the lives of others.

» Guide the child through the widening experiences of church life to become acquainted with those who help people to know God and who demonstrate how he can be of help to others.

4. *The Junior Department.* The objective is to help the junior child experience a relationship with God in terms of love, righteousness, and justice. This can be achieved in the following ways:

» Help the child in his reflective thought and sensitive feelings to maintain a personal relationship with God.

» Present Jesus Christ as a heroic spirit and as the highest revealer of God.

» Base the content of systematized study and worship on action, heroes, adventure, service, and commitment to God and Christ's way of life.

» Help the child in his practice of personal prayer and worship so that he will know God's nearness.

» Help the child to understand that God and his wonderful world are revealed through study which includes a growing knowledge of the Bible, art, music, literature, church history, and simple symbolism.

» Encourage the child to accept more responsibility, as an

obedient child of God, for his own ethical choices.

» Feed the child's growing concern over the needs and welfare of all people, understood as God's children.

» Present the church and Christianity in historical setting and lead the child toward a desire for church membership as a fuller life with God.

» Deal with the practical aspects of life and help the child to channel his feelings and commitments into acts of Christian service that are pleasing to God.

5. *The Junior High Department.* The aim is to help the junior high youth advance in his personal relationship to God, Christ, and the church fellowship to the point of commitment and participation in God's world of thoughts and deeds. This can be achieved in the following ways:

» Help the young person to focus his knowledge, feelings, and motives toward commitment to God through Jesus Christ.

» Afford worship opportunities that will stimulate him toward a God relationship in all aspects of life, and especially in boy-girl relationships.

» Lead the young person to see the Bible and Christian beliefs as essential in God's revelation, and help him through them to realize God's presence and relevancy in his life and in the lives of other people.

» Help him through nature, art, drama, music, and literature to find the aesthetic beauty existent in God's world.

» Guide him as he enters the junior high church program, by helping him to learn the meaning and function of the church, and by helping to strengthen his Godward responses through his loyalty and service in church membership.

» Emphasize Christian vocation and guide him in finding a creative and satisfying lifework.

» Help him to share in church recreation and leisure-time ac-



tivities and to discover that these activities can be enjoyed by the application of Christian principles sanctioned by God.

» Assist him in thinking critically and to find Christian solutions to the religious, social, and moral problems on the local, national, and world scenes so that the will of God can be more fully realized and the spirit of brotherhood become a growing reality.

6. *The Senior High Department.* The objective is to guide the senior high youth in his personal outreach toward mature Christianity and to help him to achieve a growing commitment to God's way as expressed in the Christian community. This can be achieved in the following ways:

» Provide study and worship opportunities that will give the youth guidance and motivation toward a more mature faith in God, and that will release him from uncritical and conflicting beliefs and feelings by leading him to a personal encounter with God.

» Stress a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, who brings to believers the consciousness of personal sin and a readiness to respond to God's forgiveness.

» Help the young person to think through his Christian beliefs so that he can bring God's reality to bear upon civic and world affairs.

» Lead him to see the social implications of the teachings of Jesus in such problems as war and peace, race relations, sex expressions, alcoholic drinking, use of money, politics, and labor problems.

» Present the Bible as the revelation of God's initiative and man's response.

» Encourage the young person's participation in the youth program of the church as a redemptive means of growing in God and assisting God in bringing his will to earth,

» Enlarge his understanding of God's intentions for sex, courtship, and marriage.

» Assist him in viewing life's vocation in the framework of God's will and purpose.

» Provide leadership opportunities through which he may feel himself an ambassador of God in guiding others into a fuller Christian life.

» Guide him to see that his recreational interests are related to his Christian witness.

7. *The Older Youth Department.* The teaching aim is to guide the older youth into a mature Christian orientation so that he may experience fellowship with God and be empowered for Christian service. This can be achieved in the following ways:

» Help the older youth through study and worship to arrive at mature concepts of the nature and function of God, Jesus, man, the Bible, and the church.

» Help him to find a release from his feelings of sin and guilt and to discover new enrichment of life and a more complete investment of personal talents in and through Jesus Christ.

» Encourage him in his determination to become educated and prepared for the tasks placed upon him by God.

» Emphasize the need for a stronger loyalty and commitment to the church as the agency for bringing God's Holy Spirit into human life.

» Stimulate a concern for understanding one's vocation and the role of love, courtship, and marriage according to the purpose of God.

» Help him to see that God as manifested in Jesus Christ is relevant to social, economic, and political problems.

» Help him to realize his personal privilege and obligation as a member of the world Christian community.

8. *The Young Adult Department.* The objective is to assist the young adult to lay hold upon new Christian meanings and resources for living openingly to God and to be committed to a Christian realism expressed in the areas of business, family, and community living. This can be achieved in the following ways:

» Provide opportunities for study and worship that move the young adult toward a deeper relationship with God and enlist him in a devoted loyalty to God's causes.

» Point up how personal and social sins may usurp the joy of living and how through God's redemption correction and release may be known.

» Guide the young adult in probing deeper into the meaning, scope, and relevancy of the Christian gospel.

» Help him to find needed strength and adjustment in God through prayer, the Bible, and the church.

» Guide the young adult in sharing with others the responsibilities of Christian stewardship in all life.

» Encourage interest in avocations and in social and recreational efforts that fall within God's approval.

» Encourage support of the church program related to the needs of young adults.

9. *The Middle Adult Department.* The Christian teacher's aim is to help the middle adult turn more completely to God, his gospel, and his church in order to gain the life-giving glory which only God can give. This can be achieved in these ways:

» Foster a spirit of Christian witness expressed through the language of relationships.

» Share in personal and corporate worship that brings self-examination, renewal, and a life called of God.

» Help the middle adult to find the will of God which brings peace, comfort, security, challenge, and action as God speaks through the life of church relationships.

» Help the individual to bring more of life into accord with the sanctions of the Bible.

» Encourage the middle adult to find a new reality in God by serving through the programs of evangelism, missions, education, finance, and stewardship.

» Lead the middle adult to come to love and enjoy people as God's children through sharing in the church's program of fellowship and recreation.

» Help the individual through organized study to clarify his Christian beliefs so that he may gain a sense of security and confidence derived from deep convictions in the truth of God.

10. *The Older Adult Department.* The objective is to help the older adult face life in Christian optimism as he approaches the "sunset stage of life," knowing that God's love and grace are sufficient now and always. This may be achieved in the following ways:

» Stress the assurance that all of life, the beginning and the end, finds its authority and power in the love, mercy, and judgment of God in Jesus Christ.

» Emphasize the uplifting power of God as essential to life lived in retirement.

» Help the older adult to overcome his fear that he may become a "has-been," unloved and forgotten, and by engaging him in the church fellowship that reveals God's love.

» Help him through study and worship to deepen his insights into death's mysteries, giving the assurance that the future rests in the love and mercy of God.

» Provide the older adult confined to his home with the opportunities to worship, to study the Bible and Christian literature, to know of the church's program and events, and to participate in forms of Christian service that are needed by others and self-fulfilling for the participant.

*must expel confusion in Ed*

### THE CENTRAL OBJECTIVE

The reasons that the central objective should be stated and understood are important and urgent.

1. There is great confusion as to what results Christian education should seek to accomplish. Many teachers and leaders are caught in a maze of baffling theories that create uncertainty and that lead to a trial-and-error attitude. From this bewilderment they ask: Are we to reconstruct personality along character lines or to transmit words of dogmas and creeds, or are we to help individuals become aware of God's seeking love as exemplified in Jesus Christ? Until every Christian teacher and leader is able through strong insight and conviction to state the supreme purpose of his task, the process of Christian education will suffer. The order of the day for Christian education is to expel confusion so that the central objective can be stated and understood clearly. *Teachers must know purpose*

2. Having a central objective unifies learning and teaching. Before a program of Christian education is started, the objective ought to be stated. Otherwise each teacher might pursue personal interests, concepts, and purposes that would collide and contradict the teaching of another. This state of affairs would be confusing to the teacher and frustrating to the student advancing from one level of learning to the next. Learning is based upon a sequence, and that which happens in a preceding stage influences and helps to determine what will take place in the advanced stage. If the objective is not adhered to and if preparation is not made in the lower grade, how can a teacher in an advanced grade accomplish his purpose? Without a unifying objective and without its being systematically adhered to in each grade, both teaching and learning are tremendously handicapped.

3. Teachers and leaders need direction in their specific roles within the Christian educative process. Without a central ob-



jective, Christian workers are left to their own discretion regarding the leadership that is expected of them. Until the church can agree upon a theory of the teacher's role, including the major emphases and their means of accomplishment, little will be gained. A teacher must see that his role is more than talking about God and Jesus and about how to be socially accepted. He must see that his leadership is designed to help each student to be responsive to God. In this way his teacher's role can be made understandable, appreciated, and more readily accepted.

4. The learner needs orientating in that which is to be achieved and needs to be informed about where Christian education is leading him. It is at this point that much of Christian education breaks down. The learner senses quickly a lack of unity and direction and soon comes to the conclusion that little is being achieved. Enthusiastic acceptance comes from the student who knows where he is being led, who is sure he is on the way toward the goal, and who enjoys the fruitage of accomplishment. But no student will arrive at this desired level until teaching is placed on a well-defined track and headed toward a worthwhile and recognizable goal.

5. The central objective will determine the materials and methods to be used. All materials and methods must be in harmony with the central objective. Without such an objective, the teacher has no means of selecting materials and methods—he selects at will, usually that which pleases him most and not what is the most productive. Without a unifying objective, the curriculum and methods lack an overall organization. When the purpose is theocentric, the teacher works with materials that will help to awaken the learner so he can share in the spirit of God and in the memory of Christ. The methods used are also in harmony with the central objective of helping the student to respond meaningfully and affirmatively to God.

6. Christian education needs a means for evaluating its suc-

cesses and failures. An objective is indispensable to the process of evaluation. If no clearly identified objective is stated, how can the supervisor and leaders know whether progress is being made? Having a central objective means that the curriculum, methods, and activities can all be evaluated against the desired goal. However, a unifying objective does more than merely evaluate the present program. It helps to determine the needs for more positive results and helps to keep out deterrent elements that retard full accomplishment. A central objective makes clear that which is important, shows up what is superficial and harmful, and gives motivation to teachers and leaders.

#### HOW IS THE CENTRAL OBJECTIVE DETERMINED?

The central objective of Christian education has been determined by insights of Christians, past and present, who have become possessed with the belief that the supreme purpose of Christian education is theological in nature. This decision has come through the inspiration of at least five basic concepts:

1. *The Hebraic-Christian Concepts of God, Man, and Redemption.* God is believed to be all reality, truth, love, goodness, and justice. Through his powers, he formed man in his likeness so that man might share in the divine love (*agape*). Man, sinful though he be, is constantly being sought by God and loved. Through Jesus Christ, God has brought redemption to man. The true objective in Christian education can be determined only as man sees his life and redemption real in God, his Father, and in Christ, his Savior.

2. *The Insight of the Way in Which Persons Become Christian.* Persons become Christian through the grace of God made manifest in Jesus Christ. When a person takes on the characteristics of Christ, not by imitation but by open response so that he becomes a new person in Christ, he knows he is Christian for he finds life and its motivations, truths, and services, in Christ. Per-

sons will never become truly Christian until they discover new life in the growing realization of the fullness of God through Christ. At such time, Christian education takes on one objective: to become aware of and receptive to God through Jesus Christ so that man might walk in divine love and truth.

3. *The Insight of the Graded Development of Persons.* The objective of Christian education must be relevant and meaningful to all graded levels of human development. God has created individual life on a graded sequence, which means that the objective of Christian education must be identified in thought forms acceptable to each level of understanding. Therefore the theological objective is real to all levels, but different in expression. Children are led to a God response through simple associations with expressions of natural life, while youth and adults respond in terms of personal relationships, redemption, and commitment to God through Christ. In determining the objective, one must be aware of the growth process of persons and of the forms of expression that will be meaningful to each stage of human development.

4. *The Insight of the Compulsion of the Christian Faith.* The early Christians were driven by the inner dynamic of the gospel. They had to give witness to the good news of Christ, even if it meant death. To help others find what they were experiencing meant to them the difference between life and death. The "good news of Christ" is a needed commodity for today. Some Christian educators are moved by the divine compulsion of the early Christians to tell the world of Jesus. These educators are claiming for Christian education the high calling of making real the glory of God in Christ Jesus. In this insight and feeling, there can be but one objective and that is theological in nature, for it upholds the early spirit of Christianity.

5. *The Insight of the Purpose and Mission of the Christian Church.* The church throughout its history has been to Christians

a family of God, a fellowship of people united and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Its purpose and mission have been to nurture people in relationships with God and others through the faith which has been manifested to it. This redemptive community within the larger social community promotes life in Christ and releases into human life God's love and activity. This purpose and mission of the church forces upon Christian education a theological objective, for the fulfillment of the church's calling is to make God real in the nurture which comes through the channel of God and the redemptive fellowship.

In summary, Christian education has moved from its wide and general scope of "objectives" to a central objective. What formerly were called "objectives of Christian education" now become supporting concerns or means of realization of the supreme purpose: to guide persons in their responses to the redeeming and life-giving God who seeks and freely gives himself to all who are open and committed to his will and purpose as revealed in the truths of the Christian gospel. This theological objective has been identified in each of the church school departments and the means for making it relevant to the level of understanding of each group have been suggested. It has been pointed up that the curriculum, teaching, and the learning arts are means for transmitting the awareness of God and are not isolated goals within themselves. This theological objective comes from a deep conviction that a God encounter, the meeting of the human with the divine, is the only true purpose of Christian education.

*purpose  
- a God encounter*

## TEN / CHRISTIAN TEACHING

CHRISTIAN TEACHING CAN BE, AND needs to be, incarnational in nature. It should assume the role of servant to the Holy Spirit. Through teaching there can be established between teacher, pupil, and God the realization of relationship and dialogue. If teaching is reduced to the impartation of subject matter alone and fails in establishing a dialogic relationship between the human and the divine, it fails in its God-given task.

### DEFINITION

Christian teaching is the communicative means of interaction and response of a fellowship united through Christian resources and a Christian objective, which helps persons to become aware of their relationship to God, his truth, and his redemption. A teaching situation usually involves a teacher who loves and understands the needs of the group; students, open to group life and united by common needs, deficiencies, and purposes; and methods and resources through which teacher and students share and respond to God as revealed in the redemptive fellowship.

Teaching is more than verbalization. It stresses educational relationships that are both personal and responsive and that teach



more by the quality of the fellowship than by attempted transmission of subject matter. When the Holy Spirit indwells the fellowship and the group begins to depend on the Divine Presence through group participation, new meanings and insights arise, judgment becomes impelling, and new life and new attitudes take form. It is then that God speaks and the group responds through teaching that is relevant and worthy.

This relationship teaching must be distinguished from training, drilling, meaningless memorizing, and all techniques of imparting facts. Teaching is sharing, educating, helping an individual to think, feel, choose, and function in the Christian faith. It is helping a person to grow as a responsive human being with other persons, to accept himself as worthy in himself, and to trust others in self-giving. In such a situation teaching will promote Christian learning because the Holy Spirit within the group has been made real and has been served.

Subject matter is not excluded from relationship teaching. It is placed in a secondary position as servant, not master. This is to say that a teacher will do more Christian teaching by being a part of the truth of God than by merely speaking about God. Christian teaching must have subject matter, but its transmission of facts has little value unless the teacher and all individuals in the group assume responsibility for sharing in and promoting the Christian truth. A teacher must be careful not to misjudge the objective and seek to transmit facts. He should instead use the facts in such way that they will awaken individuals to a divine response. The eye must be kept on the encounter and not on subject matter.

Christian teaching, then, is group interaction so imbued with the Holy Spirit that it destroys self-pride, self-dependence, sinful darkness, and ignorance in human life. Its task is to promote love, kindness, faith, response to God, and life lived according to the Christian gospel. This task is a paramount goal and can

be achieved only through Christian teaching. Christian teaching must be born of the Christian faith and relationships of love. In such context, the ignoble in life loses its power and personal sins lose their appeal and control. Victory comes when life is shared with and taken over by God in Christ Jesus.

### WHY DO TEACHERS TEACH?

Christians teach because they must! If a Christian teacher does not feel constrained by his faith to teach, then he is masquerading under a false pretense. A person who has found life in Christ feels the command of the early church: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20a). One who has experienced the love and truth of God through Jesus Christ must witness to that which God has done and is still doing. He is eager to mediate to others that which he knows and finds worthy. A teacher does not become a teacher by his own power. He is made a teacher by the Holy Spirit who really does the teaching and works the redemption of God. It is the Holy Spirit working through the teacher's dedicated talents and skills that creates a redemptive fellowship committed to proclaiming the gospel in word and deed.

If teachers teach for any other primary reason than to witness to and to share with others the gospel, they are not truly Christian teachers. Some teachers have given these reasons for teaching: "because no one else will take the job, and the class must have a teacher"; "to take children and youth off the streets and give them something to do"; "because it gives me satisfaction in knowing I am contributing something to the church"; and "because I want people to be good, kind, and gracious." Such reasons for teaching are below the Christian ideal, for they center in self-pride, moralism, and personal opinions that are less than the witness for which God has called the church into existence. The

church never will be able to fulfill its commission until teachers feel a compulsion to share what God has graciously given to them, so that all may have eternal life in Christ Jesus.

### WHAT ARE THE TEACHERS TEACHING?

Teaching since the beginning of the twentieth century has fallen into four categories. Teaching which is represented under the first three categories is at best questionable. Teaching which falls under the fourth category is acceptable and should be used.

1. *Bible-centered Teaching.* At the beginning of the century, the Bible was advocated as the true source for teaching. It was felt that all teachers were to teach the Bible and nothing else, for if a person knows the Bible he has all that is needed for being a Christian. This approach made no demands for the gradation of material or the interpretation of the Bible, since the entire Bible was viewed as the "Word of God." The reasoning behind this method was called into question, for proof came that memorized Bible passages, usually naïvely and verbally taught, did not effectively promote and guarantee Christian growth.

2. *Pupil-centered Teaching.* By 1920 the emphasis of teaching changed from Bible content to pupil-centeredness. The familiar statement was: "We do not teach the Bible, we teach persons." This method de-emphasized content, especially biblical content, and the satisfaction of "felt needs" of personality became paramount in importance. This stage made teaching so relevant to human personality that its danger lay in becoming too humanistic.

3. *Character-centered Teaching.* This method emphasized the theory that teaching was to "help people to be good and to have Christian character." The role of the teacher was to help individuals to think through, to discover, to reevaluate, and to find answers that supported a Christian ethic. The teacher's passion became the discovering of internal causes for human behavior,

the finding of ways in which to help persons adjust and find personal acceptance in group life, the discovering of the means to be consistent and positive in accordance to God's supreme values, and the applying of a method that would make Christian living functional in life situations.

4. *Gospel-centered Teaching*. In the last two decades a gospel-centered teaching has emerged. It challenges teachers to teach the Christian gospel, which in essence is contained in this statement: God is incarnate in Jesus Christ and is seeking and saving all persons who are responsive to the "good news" of Christ. This teaching is based upon the following theological convictions: God is Father, the sovereign Lord, Sustainer, and Redeemer; God has something to say to man, to do for man, as revealed in the biblical message; and persons, sinful though they be, may find eternal life in God's forgiveness and salvation made known through faith in Jesus Christ. This method calls for more than moral examples. It seeks personal response, commitment, and fellowship with the God who forgives, strengthens, and makes eternal.

#### HOW TEACHING MAY BE MADE MORE THEOLOGICAL

When a teacher assists in making God more understandable and more real to others, he is performing a necessary theological task. He is indeed teaching theology whenever he helps his students to understand such topics as: (1) God's nature and purpose, (2) God's incarnation in human existence through Jesus Christ, (3) God's revelatory and redemptive drama as expressed in the holy Bible, (4) God's calling into existence the church as an instrument of faith, salvation, and service, and (5) God's presence in the Holy Spirit through responsive persons who serve as witnesses to the Christian life.

How may a teacher make theological affirmations central and discernible in his teaching witness?

1. A teacher can make his teaching more theological by being



more responsive to God's confrontations. A teacher cannot reveal God without first being confronted by God. A teacher cannot give what he has not experienced and does not possess. When God has become real to the teacher and the teacher serves as a channel of the love, mercy, and forgiveness of God, this contagion will permeate the whole class. To teach theology, then, the teacher must possess theology.

2. A teacher can make his teaching more theological by understanding the supreme concern of Christian teaching. The supreme concern of Christian teaching is to help persons live responsively to God. This leads them to share in the saving fellowship of the church so that Christian living may emerge and be a witness to all of the love of God. If Christian teaching is so interpreted, its message and witness will be saturated with theological truths. If its witness is not so interpreted, its concerns will be more humanistic and materialistic, and thereby less theological. To be theological, teaching needs to be aware of its God-centered task.

3. A teacher can make his teaching more theological by emphasizing the need of God. In order to be theological in nature, teaching must exemplify the need for God in human living. A teacher who teaches in an atmosphere that is permeated by his sincere trust and dependence on the goodness of God will teach theology of the strongest sort. His theological teaching will not be confined to words only, but will be strongly portrayed in shared relationships.

4. A teacher can make his teaching more theological by emphasizing the conviction that Christian life can be realized only as a person responds to God's revealed love as made known in Jesus Christ. When a teacher believes that Christian life is based on a revealed love of God, he is in a position to make his teaching theological in nature. By seeing that life is real only in relationship with God and in group life imbued by the Holy Spirit,



the teacher becomes alive to eternal life as lived and taught in Jesus Christ.

5. A teacher can make his teaching more theological by presenting the Bible as God's revelation to man, showing how man has responded as a witness to this proclamation. A teacher who wants to teach theologically must have a biblical foundation and orientation. The Bible is God's way of confronting man with his will and purpose. Unless a teacher listens, hears, and becomes obedient to this divine proclamation, he will never possess and will never teach the wondrously good news of eternal life. To teach theologically is to allow God to speak through his Word.

6. A teacher can make his teaching more theological by showing how the church is a redemptive community committed to continue God's activity of redeeming love. When the church is so interpreted and used by a teacher as an instrument of God's impartation of new life, he is enlarging his theological context. A teacher is teaching theologically when he is able to communicate the concept that the church in its person-to-person relationships is not only transforming each individual in the fellowship but is helping to evangelize the wider community. Thus, a teacher is dealing with theology when he is able to communicate the idea that the church is a fellowship of committed people willing to become channels of God's grace.

7. A teacher can make his teaching more theological by inspiring persons to live in the Christian community of faith. Christian growth can be sustained only within a community of persons who live in faith and are continuously giving testimony of what God has done for them and of what he seeks to do for the world. When a teacher can communicate through his own life and through the fellowship of the class the belief that growth in God comes through faith, his teaching has a theological dimension.

## HOW DOES ONE TEACH IN A THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT?

Teaching in a theological context does not differ from other teaching except that the objective, direction, atmosphere, and content are all God-centered. The theological context differs from the psychological or sociological context in that the theological context relates all the parts of teaching-learning to meanings, concepts, and commitments centered in God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Many effective methods are available to the Christian teacher. Some of these are listed below under three categories: ways of revealing the Christian faith, ways of expressing a response to the Christian faith, ways of sharing the Christian faith in relationships.

### *Ways of Revealing the Christian Faith*

**STORYTELLING.** This method is most effective, especially with children, in communicating the Christian faith. Its strength lies in its capacity to identify the listeners with Christian ideas and characters portrayed. The story can translate Christian truth into contemporary life, helping persons to appropriate Christian truths with deeper meaning, appreciation, and motivation as their minds and emotions are stirred.

**LECTURE.** The lecture method is a creative one, but it is often abused. In many cases a class needs information interpreted and ideas put into common language. A lecture is then justified. But if the lecturer misjudges the intellectual status of the class and overrates or underrates the levels of understanding and interest, his lecture will create a passive state and deaden the spirit of his hearers. The lecture is a method that can be used easily with other methods, such as question-and-answer and discussion. When used with other methods, it can add variety and interest to the class session. It is more effective in the youth and adult

divisions than in the children's division. Care should be exercised in using the lecture method with children.

**PICTURES, MAPS, AND DIAGRAMS.** Such visuals offer a method for stimulating thought, discussion, evaluation, and application. When a teacher is dealing with biblical geography and history, Christian biography in time and place, the church's missionary work, and world-wide social and religious conditions, he can put to good use background materials that help to create interest and understanding. Pictures help to stimulate questions, to encourage conversation, and to lead to Christian devotion. Visuals can give a teacher insight into the life of his pupils through their responses. When used with imagination, they can do much to stimulate the religious growth of students.

**AUDIO-VISUALS.** The sixteen millimeter movie and the sound filmstrip are two of the most important audio-visuals. There are also other audio aids such as disk recordings and tape and wire recordings. Other visual aids include slides, flat pictures, models, handcrafts, charts, maps, graphs, microscopes, and telescopes. These aids are used in a method that combines hearing and seeing in its form of communication. The method is important in helping to communicate the Christian faith by means of sense perception as well as by intellectual perception. Audio-visuals can be used to motivate and guide group discussions, induce worship attitudes, and provide fellowship.

**DRAMATIZATION.** Drama evokes interest, identification, analysis, understanding, and appreciation. Drama affords the opportunity for actors and members of the audience alike to live emphatically a part of another's life. It pulls them into an identification with the causes served by such a life. Information and understanding are communicated as the actors and audience share in the circumstances of the plot and in the deeper feelings of characters. Drama strikes deeply, and carries a stronger message, when Bible stories and concerns are portrayed in common life. Extra bene-

fits materialize when pupils are allowed to take Christian themes from original settings and to make up their own dialogue, to interpret the characters, to decide on the scenes, and to draw a Christian conclusion. Widely acclaimed are the informal drama skits, playacting, dramatic impersonations, dialogues, and monologues. Through them, persons become more informed in the great drama in which God has been and now is the main actor.

**QUESTION-AND-ANSWER METHOD.** This method should be used in connection with the discussion method. If it is not related to discussion it tends to promote impersonal, factual, fragmentary information which has little motivating interest. Questions should have a "lead on" quality so that the thinking process will begin, new information will become connected with old ideas, and the scope of understanding will be enlarged. Questions are helpful in recalling information important to a session, in opening new areas of thought, in correcting misunderstandings, and in helping to guide pupils into the larger implications of their Christian faith. When rightly used, the question-and-answer method can guide interest, create concern, and challenge pupils to deeper investigation in areas of Christian thought.

**RESEARCH.** A useful method overlooked by many teachers is that of research. When difficult problems arise in a class discussion, the teacher should consider the usefulness of assigning research problems to class members. Biblical problems dealing with questions of geographical background, dates and customs of Bible people, and problems and conditions of Bible times all lend themselves to the use of the research method. Research projects can also be assigned in the area of problems and concerns of community living related to the Christian faith. Research can help students in all those areas in which a certain background of factual information is necessary for the understanding of Christian teachings.

**PANEL DISCUSSION.** The panel discussion consists of four to

eight panelists who share ideas before a larger group. The panelists are informed persons, usually of varied views, who discuss a subject publicly. The panel discussion is particularly beneficial in dealing with controversial matters and certain advanced problems. After panel members present their views, the larger group is allowed to ask questions, make personal observations, and add thoughts overlooked by the panel. A moderator introduces the panel, states the theme, keeps panel members on the subject, and summarizes the discussion. This method is creative in that it helps persons to think, to be tolerant, to see that people may be sincere and still have opposite views, and to organize opposing views into some type of solution. The panel discussion should be used more, for it is democratic in procedure and fruitful in furnishing information needed for Christian living.

**SYMPOSIUM.** When the symposium method is used, the topic is divided into separate phases and a speaker is assigned to each phase. The phases may be simply varied points of view of the topic. When a topic is too advanced for common knowledge, well-informed persons may be asked to form a symposium and in turn present separate speeches, furnishing information which when taken collectively is sufficient for adequate understanding. After the speeches, a question-and-answer session is held. The moderator delivers the final remarks and draws to a conclusion all previously stated ideas. This method pushes back the unknown and helps pupils to accept new concepts because of the added information. The Christian faith has many areas in theology—such as the concepts involved in the incarnation of God, the Trinity, and immortality—to which the symposium method may be applied.

### *Ways of Expressing a Response to the Christian Faith*

**INTERPRETATIVE READING.** This method reveals the thought and feeling of literature through oral speech. The reading is an interpretative response rendered through voice and gestures, ex-



emplifying truths and emotions that are sufficient to create responses in those who listen and share. Interpretative reading must be graded, for words and expression must be meaningful and appreciated by the listener. The method is used most effectively in worship, although it may be used in study and recreation. The interpreter must give diligent study to the selection, for it must speak first to the reader before it can be interpreted through his voice inflections, facial expressions, and bodily gestures. Good speech techniques are essential so that the interpreter will portray the message rather than himself. There are many Bible passages that may be used in this method. These include the Creation story in Genesis, the Christmas story as found in Matthew and Luke, and the Easter story as expressed in the Gospels.

**CHORAL SPEECH.** This method utilizes a speech choir which gives artistic expression through spoken language. It is made up of a variety of high, medium, and low voices which give expression in unison, solos, duets, and quartets, depending on the mood, feeling, and word picture desired. This method is an artistic response with dramatic appeal. It is advocated as a medium of gaining responses in others through scripture, poems, and short drama skits. The Bible offers many selections for choral speech. Chief among them are: Psalms 24, 100, 121, 148, 150; Isaiah 53: 3-5, 7; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a; and Matthew 5:1-11. Study and practice are needed in order that the true meaning, mood, and form may be revealed. The rendition must have dignity, beauty, and appeal if it is to be effective. Any leader who has a musical background and an artistic taste for expression can direct a choric choir.

**RHYTHMIC CHOIR.** The rhythmic choir is a choir of persons who translate sounds, speech, or music into meanings and feelings of worship through the use of symbolic and artistic motion and design. It has been most effective in helping people to re-

spond to God and gain new power and insight through the symbolic movements that gather up the feelings and moods of the choir members as well as those who share in the observation. Movement is portrayed as praise, thanksgiving, contrition, submission, or dedication to God. Careful preparation is needed in order that the meaning is felt and that movements are dignified and skillful. Grace and beauty are essential to the work of the rhythmic choir. Special attention should be given to the skill and dignity of walking, kneeling, using the hands and arms, and directing the focus, for each movement portrays a symbolic meaning and mood.

**CREATIVE HANDWORK.** There are many types of creative handwork: graphic arts, ceramics, manual arts, literary composition, paper work, sewing and weaving, and service items. All materials and techniques should be graded on the basis of interest, appreciation, and skills involved. The teacher should realize that the marginal benefits are more important than the work itself. What happens to the pupil is of greatest importance, for he is growing in his social and divine responses through creative handwork.

**MUSIC ACTIVITY.** Music is a medium that can be used to express thoughts and emotions by voice or instrument, or both united, through variations of rhythm, melody, harmony, contrast, and tone quality. It is a response of the soul which expresses deep feelings and thoughts. It has from early times helped man to grow and reach out toward God and the world of beauty and truth. Music should be graded to the interests and capabilities of its hearers. Unfamiliar words and strange symbolism—such as blood, and ivory palaces—should be eliminated from children's music. Music activity has many forms: choirs, recordings, group singing, instrumental playing, rhythm bands, and folk games. The skillful use of music by a teacher or by a leader of worship can lead participating class members to make personal responses to God.

*Ways of Sharing the Christian Faith in Relationships*

**PLAY.** Play is a child's spontaneous activity of meaningful and joyous expression. Through play a child reduces life to his level of understanding. He learns through play; he develops attitudes and gives expression to his feelings as he plays. A nursery child may play alone, but soon he will start playing and sharing with other children in the foundational patterns out of which will come later his Christian faith. This God-given play-urge should be guided in the direction of Christian expressions as the child begins responding to the beauty of God's world through play. In play relationships he is stimulated to be interested in and show appreciation for what others, including the teacher, find of beauty, mystery, and worth.

**CONVERSATION.** Conversation may be defined as free expression by two or more individuals as they exchange ideas, attitudes, and feelings. It may be used as a part of other methods, or it may stand alone as a "sharing period" when students exchange ideas and feelings under the guidance of a teacher. When students are properly motivated they will respond, causing others to respond and share. It is natural for them to like to share common interests and to be worthy contributors to Christian results. In teaching the Christian faith, conversation is a method used to open areas of new information, to clarify ideas, to correct false impressions, and to unify the group into a Christian fellowship. The method is not totally spontaneous, for the teacher should prepare the topic and anticipate important questions. He should also be alert to guide the conversation toward the Christian objective.

**DISCUSSION.** The discussion method can be used to direct the class toward the solution of a problem through the exchange of ideas and feelings. Discussion is more formal and more advanced than mere conversation. It makes greater demands upon the reasoning powers of participants. Discussion is popular as a

method for it is based on the natural urge of expression and enjoyment of sharing. The leader is most important to a discussion, for he chooses the discussion area or question and guides the sharing into important issues. He further sees that all persons have an opportunity to share and to make frequent summarizations so that the objective will not be lost in much talking. Discussion is not a debate; it is a planned and guided method of sharing in an atmosphere conducive to the working of the Holy Spirit.

**ROLE-PLAYING.** In role-playing, the individual assumes the role of another person, seeing imaginatively the tensional situation and reacting as he feels the portrayed person would react. Role-playing should reflect as objectively as possible the thoughts, attitudes, and behavior patterns of another. This task is not only stimulating to the actor but to the observing group as well. All share in attitudes which previously may have been seen subjectively only but which now can be viewed by all objectively. This method helps to bring forth the reasons why a person may react in a given way and how it feels to be in another's role. After each member of the cast has been allowed to interpret his feelings, corrections in keeping with the Christian faith may be offered. To personalize roles of living is good teaching, for attitudes and behavior are affected greatly and responses to God's way made more relevant.

**BUZZ GROUPS.** The reducing of a large group of persons into smaller groups for the purpose of more effective participation, analysis, and evaluation of a given topic or problem is the buzz group method. This method allows each individual an opportunity to share in the program and to contribute his ideas to the final results. Buzz groups are significant when the topic to be discussed is relevant, when members are interested, and when participants have enough information to make a contribution. Sharing ignorance is of no benefit. This often happens when the

leader is poorly prepared and the buzz groups poorly guided. The leader should direct the discussion toward a Christian objective and should help to integrate the discussion into definite recommendations. The appointed secretary keeps the suggestions, writes up the recommendations, and reads the report to the group as a whole. A Christian spirit that is stimulating and challenging needs to prevail before the buzz group method can serve effectively as an instrument of sharing in the Christian faith.

**SEMINAR.** The seminar is basically a permissive group united for the purpose of research, evaluation, and the recording of definite findings. The seminar begins with a broad topic or problem which is subdivided into parts for individual research. The results of such research are later presented to the entire seminar group. The sharing comes when each subtopic is presented and the entire group begins asking questions, helping in the evaluation of the findings, making additional suggestions, arriving at conclusions, and synthesizing the findings. The teacher should be well informed and should offer guidance through well-placed questions and comments. He assists in the organization of the findings and in the making of group decisions. The seminar method can profitably be applied to Christian attitudes and practices related to such problems as racial integration, alcoholism, crime and delinquency, sex education, and labor-management concerns. The seminar method can play an important part in helping groups to reach Christian solutions based on factual information. It is particularly valuable in assisting serious-minded persons to grow in their appreciation of the intellectual respectability of the Christian faith.

#### HOW TO PREPARE A SESSION FOR CHRISTIAN TEACHING

A teacher needs to have had some training in leadership education before beginning to teach. This is necessary because a teacher cannot teach adequately until he has some conception



of the nature and supreme purpose of Christian education, an understanding of the characteristics, background, and needs of the pupils to be taught, and some skill in the art of communication. These essential qualifications should add up to teaching confidence, enjoyment, and a deep sense of obligation. In preparing for a teaching session, a teacher would do well to give thought to the following suggestions.

1. Prepare the mind and heart in the love and truth of God. Within this suggestion is the key to preparation. A teacher may be well informed, may have completed the session plan, and may be eager to teach; but without the spirit of God within, he will never truly teach, for he will not be a medium of God if he is not first responsive to God. A teacher cannot impart what he does not have, so his first step in preparing to teach is to open his life to God's action.

2. Think widely, pray deeply, and plan long range. The teacher should read such materials as the teacher's quarterly, the student's quarterly, and other materials written especially for the unit of study. But he should also extend his reading to include books, magazines, newspapers, and literary sources dealing with the lesson theme. Further helps may come from radio or television programs, informal conversations, and questions gathered from pupils in previous sessions. These sources should help the teacher to see the unit of study as a whole and to plan each session so that it fits into the unit purpose. It is helpful to outline briefly in advance each session in the unit. This long range look helps the teacher to see the materials fall into place in an overall plan.

3. Plan the session. A planned session takes form in four divisions: purpose, content, procedure, and results. In following these steps, the plan should be written and made familiar to the teacher so that it may be followed in class. At the same time it should afford flexibility, for a session does not always unfold

exactly as planned. The first question to be considered is: What is to be accomplished? The answer dwells upon understanding where the pupils stand in their development in relation to the unit objective. The next step comes in the selection of content materials such as stories, illustrations, Bible references, quotations, poems, pictures, maps, and graphs. Methods and forms of communication should be determined by the type of materials used. There may be one main method, or several methods, used in a single session. When several methods are used, they should connect with one another or they should follow each other without a break in mood or thought so that they contribute to the movement of a session toward its conclusion. The conclusion should be drawn through the help of the class, with the teacher expecting new ideas, feelings, and commitments.

4. Evaluate the results. Evaluation should be attempted soon after the session is held, while the happenings are fresh in the teacher's mind. The teacher should connect the next session to the growth experienced in the session just taught. All successes and failures should be noted, for they should be considered in future planning.

5. Check equipment. The teacher should arrive early so he will have time to check the equipment and to see that the necessary teaching materials and helps are in order and conveniently located.

Christian teaching has been presented in this chapter as the means of establishing a dialogic relationship between the human and the divine. This is the teacher's true obligation. If his teaching falls below this ideal, it is wanting. Christian teaching should be theologically centered and at the same time should make use of adequate psychological and sociological principles. Christian teachers need to become committed to helping persons live responsively to God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

## ELEVEN / CURRICULUM AS GOD'S MEDIUM OF DIS- CLOSURE

TO PLACE THE CURRICULUM IN A theological setting is to furnish the curriculum with a revelatory background and a theological direction which support a communication between God and man. Interpreting the curriculum in a theological focus does not mean that the curriculum becomes completely a content of theology; it means that all content materials and activities used are revelatory in nature, that they are conducive to and permit a flow-through of God and his Christian truth into a communication to persons who respond.

### THE MEANING OF CURRICULUM

Curriculum is the directive and supporting medium, including all materials and activities used, through which God may disclose himself and win man's response to his will.

The materials, activities, and experiences falling within this definition of curriculum relate to such subjects as the Bible and Christian literature; Christian concepts such as God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the church; the history of religion, Christianity, and the church; world religions; the church and its contemporary purpose and task; social, economic, and political issues; the art and purpose of worship; and the knowledge of self and the hu-

man race. Topics such as these are studied, examined, evaluated, and made personal. This in turn allows mental and spiritual doors to open which permit God and Christian truth to emerge and be encountered. The curriculum so defined shows itself to be more than Christian content; it is the path over which flow the materials and activities toward a God response. Its function is to guide and make real the grace of God's presence.

Instead of placing the curriculum in an experience-centered context and holding that it arises and finds meaning in the experiences of an individual who is under guidance and that it is the utilization of life situations under reconstruction, the above definition differs from the social-liberal theory by emphasizing a theological context that uses all materials and activities with a Christian potential as a medium which finds meaning and direction in God's disclosure. This view rejects the idea that the curriculum is in the main a source of life-centeredness concentrating on the reevaluation of personality, the reconstruction of experience, and the formulation of behavior standards. Instead the curriculum arises and draws its power from the revelation of God as it is made relevant through materials and activities that are capable of maintaining insights and motivations needed by individuals in their move toward God.

#### REDEFINITION OF CURRICULUM

The curriculum has been redefined because the definitions of the past have been too centered in persons, in their needs and experiences, and not in the confrontations of God. The curriculum has been allowed to function without a clear-cut divine direction and imperative, without an emphasis on the importance on a human-divine relationship, and without a distinctly identified divine support. The following are some of the weaknesses of older theories which have led toward a new gospel-centered view of curriculum.

1. *The Bible-centered Curriculum.* This theory advocates faith in the efficacy of the Bible. The filling of a person's mind with biblical facts is held to be the supreme task of Christian education. But persons do not become Christian merely by absorbing a Bible content. They grow in Christianity in a broader context that includes the gospel and the whole person. To "know the Bible" is not proof that Christian character will result. Curriculum builders and users disagree even among themselves as to what portion of scripture should be studied. Should the Bible be graded to meet the new concern for the needs, interests, and capacities of growing persons? How should the Bible be taught—factually, historically, or related to present experiences and life situations? This unsettled climate created dissatisfaction and forced the curricular theory into its second phase.

2. *The Pupil-centered Curriculum.* This theory replaced the central concern for the Bible with a central concern for the felt needs and interests of the pupil. The Bible and the Christian gospel were almost forgotten; the pupil became primary in curriculum matters. The curriculum became subject to what leaders and teachers thought the pupil needed, or what the pupil said he needed. The last word came from the interest of the pupil. Again dissatisfaction arose on the part of many Christian educators who questioned this method of building the curriculum. Pupil-centeredness then gave way to experience-centeredness.

3. *The Experience-centered Curriculum.* This theory contended that there was no experience that did not influence the growth of persons. Creation, guidance, and enrichment of experience toward more Christlikeness became the passion of this theory. Experience came close to being the sole basis for building, executing, and evaluating the curriculum. In fact, the curriculum became so involved in experience that it soon was defined as being "planned experiences." In many cases, it became the acceptable norm to use experiences as ends in themselves,



even when the experiences were quite secular and apparently without a strong God direction. This state of affairs drew attacks from many Christian educators who agreed that the curriculum should be relevant and meaningful, but who insisted at the same time that it should be centered in the gospel so that all experiences would be directed toward God and would become a medium of God disclosure.

4. *The Gospel-centered Curriculum.* This recent theory of the curriculum moves in a vertical dimension. It uses materials and activities that are capable of serving as channels of God's presence and message. It seeks to provide an atmosphere through which God may confront man. The theory gives importance to persons but insists that persons must be viewed in relation to God. This gospel-centered theory accepts psychological truths but pushes the content beyond its place in time and history to the realm of the supernatural so that God may speak his truth and salvation through the curriculum.

The three-fold purpose of the curriculum now can be stated briefly as that of assisting in making God real to man, of creating a theological directive-atmosphere so natural that the materials and methods find the climate sufficient to create a Godward outreach, and of awakening man through the Christian gospel to his need for a response to God. The gospel-centered approach is the only one that upholds God's revelation and man's response to this revelation as absolute in man's salvation.

#### SELECTING CURRICULAR MATERIALS

How are teachers, especially those in the local church, to select the materials written from a given point of reference so they may arrive at a desired outcome? Five suggestions are made to help leaders and teachers in selecting curricular materials:

1. Be willing to accept help in discovering the wide differences that exist in curricular materials. Many teachers and lead-

ers lack information about curricular matters and fail to see that materials written from a certain point of view, or from a given principle, will arrive at a result determined by the viewpoint or principle. It must be made plain that a redemptive, God-centered objective cannot be realized by curricular materials imbued by secularism and humanistic concerns. It is at this very point that many local teachers break down, expecting redemptive results from nonredemptive sources. A theological result comes from a content that is theologically oriented. How can a teacher expect the pupils to know and encounter God when the curriculum is made up of creative activities without even a God reference? If God-centered results are desired, then a curriculum must be selected that is capable of mediating the everseeking God.

2. If in doubt as to the correct curriculum, accept the prescribed denominational materials. If necessary, interpret and supplement the unit so that it will be theological in nature. Since theology is relevant to life and denominational materials are unlikely to drop below Christian levels, most subjects will help to open the pupil toward God's love and truth. One encouraging fact needs mentioning: most of the major denominations are re-studying their curricular materials and the trend is toward more biblical theology in each study unit. So the teacher who is following denominational materials will find himself teaching more and more in a theological and biblical context.

3. In selecting curricular materials insist upon a vertical dimension that allows God to be seen in the following terms: (a) the divine Initiative that reveals God as love seeking his own and reconciling the world unto himself; (b) the divine Encounter that builds relationships with mankind in order that a redemptive fellowship may be established; (c) the divine Revealer who confronts man with himself as expressed through Jesus Christ, the holy Bible, and the Christian fellowship; (d) the divine Re-

deemer who knows man's moral predicament of sinfulness and rebellion, but who still through love forgives and restores man in a relationship of faith and grace; (e) the divine Sustainer, the source of power which sensitizes, unifies, and strengthens the divine aspirations and commitments of all devotees; and (f) the divine Sovereign, who is the supreme Lord and Master over all mankind and the universe. When these characteristics of God are portrayed in the basic content, they are most likely to produce information, atmosphere, and direction which will enable God to reveal himself and aid persons in their response to him.

4. Select curricular materials that will assist in the realization of:

a. Insights and commitments to the love, mercy, and judgment of God. This realization is most important because it is God and his attributes that give meaning to all the other elements of the curriculum. Unless curricular materials afford insights into God's goodness and a desire to be committed and dependent on him, persons will never realize God's spirit entering into their weakness and giving divine strength.

b. An acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Materials worthy of acceptance give witness that God was in Christ and that Christ is today God's greatest means of revealing himself to the world. Because Christ is the "good news" of God, revealing the love and saving power of God and the perfection of the gospel, the materials used in teaching must lead persons in their acceptance of Christ as the Savior and Lord of their lives.

c. Forgiveness of God and newness of life. Select materials which make vital the gospel, the proclamation of what God has accomplished redemptively in Christ Jesus, for through such materials this revelation becomes real and brings conviction to man's need for God's forgiveness. By sharing in God's grace, man is saved from his dilemma of sinfulness and is restored to newness of life in Christ.

d. A communal relationship through the Christian church. Desired materials will give support to the realization that God continues to reveal himself through relationships existing in the Christian church community. The materials that help bind people together in Christian love and sharing, and that help the church to be the "community of God" dedicated to a life of Christian witness, are most desirable.

e. The message and presence of God through the Bible and Christian literature. Materials worthy of acceptance will be the Bible itself or Christian literature that sustains biblical truths. The Bible is God's greatest means of confrontation, for it bears witness to God's salvation and presents the Christian gospel needed by mankind.

f. Christian living through home and family relations. Curricular materials should include the home and family life as helpful in growing Christian living. The Christian faith can be made known in the relevancy of family living, for through the relationship of love and mutual understanding, God's love can be felt and life can be so lived that it will become an act of pleasing God.

g. A Christian vocation. Materials should be of such quality that a vocation is properly placed in the realm of God's call and so selected and executed that a sense of God's purpose and blessing are expressed through honest labor.

h. A spirit of humanitarian service and Christian love. Materials should strike deeply into personal feelings and put into action the spirit and teachings of Christ.

i. A Christian program of world missions. Curricular materials should uphold God's purpose in reconciling the world—all the world—through Christ as he is shared and witnessed to by ecumenical servants of the Christian church.

5. Select those materials which sustain:

a. The main tenets of the Protestant Reformation. Curricular

materials should stress the teachings of the Reformers who gave emphasis to the sovereignty of God, justification by faith, authority vested in Jesus Christ and the holy Scriptures, and the community of believers.

b. Christian witness and outreach. Materials should create the sense of obligation to give Christian witness to what God has accomplished through Jesus Christ in each human life. To allow this fact to go unrecognized is to deny the reason for the existence of the church. To witness for God in word and deed is man's greatest privilege. To reach out with the gospel in love toward others should be encouraged strongly by all curricular materials.

c. Gradation. Materials must be graded as closely as circumstances will permit. God has graded human growth into stages: infants, children, youth, and adults. They all have their specific range of response, for their native equipment and "growing edges" vary at each stage. Effective materials are written in this knowledge. They provide the means which are capable of mediating meanings, stimulation, and challenge for each stage of growth. Gradation must never be neglected. If it is, communication and relationships are restricted.

d. Teachableness. Curricular materials should be communicative in nature and should be capable of being used by a teacher. Materials should aid the teacher in creating a relationship between God and class members and should assist him in making Christ's leadership evident in life.

e. Adequacy in scope and length. Desirable materials should be geared to the fulfillment of the objective—no more, no less. They should afford enough material and activities to accomplish the purpose and should be organized carefully so that they will not confuse the theme but will help to make God's presence felt and understood.



## HELPING THE TEACHER TO USE THE CURRICULUM

Regardless of its quality, the curriculum is useless without an effective teacher whose skills help the pupils to become aware of and responsive to God—the end result of all Christian teaching. Since the teacher's use of the curriculum is so important and since so many teachers are in need of help in using the curriculum, eight suggestions pointing up the teacher's greatest needs of assistance are offered below.

1. The teacher needs help in the realization that being responsive to God through his many confrontations is essential in the use of the curriculum. The teacher and the curriculum are inseparable—the quality of one affects that of the other. It is impossible for a teacher to stand on the sideline and through a distant manipulation to affect the curriculum's mediation of God's presence. The desired results come from relationships and from sharing, which include the teacher. His spiritual glow and example determine the strength of his guidance and normally set the atmosphere and direction of class participation. Fundamentally important to the use of the curriculum is the teacher's own spiritual awareness and personal faithfulness to God, Christ, and the church.

2. The teacher needs help in realizing that what happens to the pupils in relation to the objective is of more importance than "easy teaching." Many teachers agree on the Christian objective of the curriculum, which is a responsive encounter with God, but are confused about how the curriculum can be used to achieve this objective. This confusion has frequently led to a stress on "easy teaching materials" rather than to a primary stress on what is happening to pupils in terms of the desired objective. If the curriculum materials are easy to teach, some teachers feel the materials are good and should be used. In this fashion they may be deterring the fulfillment of the objective. "Easy materials" may lend themselves to lecturing, to reading

of the "lesson," to the asking and answering of irrelevant, wooden, and printed questions, to the holding of Bible quizzes and drills, and to the working out of Bible puzzles. But such activities often fall short of mediating God's presence and truth and should therefore give way to a more "difficult" and profitable curriculum so that the Christian objective can be reached.

3. The teacher needs help in understanding the necessity for a theological context for the curriculum. One of the worst errors of the teacher in using curricular materials is to teach in a historical or contemporary context that is not united to the theological. This does not mean that the historical and contemporary contexts should be belittled or denied. They are essential for a factual foundation. But they should not be ends in themselves. They should be extended toward a higher perspective that deals with the message of God's revelation, the Christian faith, and the biblical gospel. The teacher should be able to see that materials which cannot be raised above the natural and social into a theological setting should not be used, for they will never in themselves be able to lead to the Christian objective—God.

4. The teacher needs help in placing the pupils' needs "in relationships" through the curriculum. The needs of the pupils must not be denied a significant position in Christian teaching, for these needs make known the pupils to the teacher and make possible relevancy in Christian education. Teachers in the past have too often made the needs of the pupils the sole interest in their teaching. Teachers err here in considering the pupils' needs alone without a higher projection. Needs must stand in terms of relationships: in terms of God, Christ, biblical covenants, and the church community. The teacher should allow the pupils' needs to contribute to theological insights adjusted to the particular age levels. When persons reach out for the satisfaction of their needs, becoming responsive, the reality of God does not come as readily through ideas as through relationships imbued

with the presence of God's Holy Spirit. This unification of needs and relationships should be central in all Christian teaching.

5. The teacher needs help in learning which are the proper curricular materials for his age group. Many teachers use curricular materials written for age groups other than the age level of their students. Their error may come as a result of being poorly informed or through the belief that this is an acceptable practice. Regardless of the reason, such a procedure should stop. Departmental materials should be used only in the department for which the materials were intended. Leadership education can solve this problem by stressing the truths of gradation and relevancy.

6. The teacher needs help in realizing that physical conditions affect the usage of the curriculum. A productive curriculum must have an adequate physical setting in which to function. To have one without the other makes Christian education defective and under extreme circumstances impossible. Many teachers are using their curriculums to poor effect in overcrowded rooms without sufficient floor space and without adequate space for furniture such as worktables, cabinets, interest objects, book displays, play areas with play equipment, chalkboards, and bulletin boards. In some classrooms there is just enough space for several rows of chairs and a lectern. This makes for poor usage of the curriculum. Often drapes and carpets are missing along with any use of interesting color. This contributes to a depressing atmosphere that retards responses. Teachers need to know that overcrowding brings overstimulation, disciplinary problems, and general confusion. In this way it serves to defeat the curriculum. Although the ideal is not always possible, teachers when properly motivated can use more wisely their room space and can brighten the classroom with color and reasonable decorations. All this will add effectiveness to their teaching.

7. The teacher needs help in making available adequate re-

sources that give strength to the basic curriculum. Teachers need constantly to receive helps, suggestions, and new ideas in regard to using curricular materials. A teacher should not be left alone to draw solely upon his own resources no matter how prepared and experienced he may be. New ideas and new ways of teaching are always forthcoming. To have access to these ever-growing resources is a prerequisite to becoming an effective teacher. Most denominations have teacher magazines that offer a wealth of information, methods, projects, and activities which will aid the pupil in confronting the realities of the curriculum. All teachers should be informed concerning these helps and advised as to how they can use them for effective teaching. Adequate resources can come from "teacher consultants" who may visit classroom sessions and assist the teacher. In looking for resources, a teacher should not overlook help from inspirational and religious books, church magazines, pamphlets, the Bible, commentaries, Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, religious art and pictures, films and slides, maps, charts, music, drama, field trips, surveys, and resource persons. Such resource suggestions and helps may be made more accessible through the use of a filing system. Teachers should be encouraged to have their own personal files, and each department should have a departmental file for resources peculiar to the departmental needs and age level.

8. The teacher needs help in recognizing the reasons for ineffective results in using curricular materials. Some of the more common reasons for poor teaching results are as follows:

a. Poor results come by making the curriculum an end rather than a means. The end to which the curriculum is dedicated is God. When it becomes a tool by which pupils are made responsive to God and an instrument through which God may speak, then it begins to fulfill its purpose.

b. Poor results come when teachers are unable to translate the

curriculum into living realities. The curriculum must be vital, alive, and challenging. It should call forth relevant responses of pupils to God.

c. Poor results come from poor orientation in curricular matters. A lack of understanding in the purpose and use of materials will cause the materials to be ignored or to be stored in cabinets unused.

d. Poor results come from poor preparation of materials for each session. Curricular materials cannot substitute for careful planning and study in a receptive mood of prayer.

e. Poor results come from poor participation and poor sharing in class fellowship. A divided group makes communal relationships impossible and weakens the workings of the Holy Spirit.

f. Poor results come when there is a lack of teacher understanding of the intention of the writer of the curricular materials. When this situation prevails, distortion occurs and the true meaning is confused and possibly lost.

Ineffectiveness can be corrected, and teachers can be made more proficient in the use of the curriculum if time and effort are given through leadership education.

The purpose of this chapter has been to show that the curriculum is a medium through which God's love can be communicated to responsive man. Emphasis has been given to the centrality of the gospel message and the need for faith on the part of participating class members. The curriculum should go beyond the giving of mere data. It should help to create an atmosphere that is conducive to a God encounter that makes real the redemptive grace of God. All that goes in the name of the curriculum should be viewed as instrumental in nature and should support both God's confrontations and man's response.



## TWELVE / GROUP LIFE AS REDEMPTIVE SHARING

### A REDEMPTIVE GROUP LIFE IS THE

essential structure and environment needed for the attainment of the objective of Christian education. This group life must be redemptive in nature; it must possess a Christian quality. Since the group process is vital to the fulfillment of the goal of Christian education—a meeting of God and man—it too should be viewed in a theological context that shows how group climate and interaction support a redemptive sharing. In order to understand the intention of this chapter, it is necessary first to examine the phrase “group life” for its foundational meaning in fulfilling the objective of Christian education.

#### DEFINITION

Group life is interpersonal sharing. Individuals become a group when they unite and give themselves freely to each other, expressing and sharing in group response, attitudes, ideals, and purposes. In a group situation, the individual has the tendency to let go of selfish interests and to become submissive to the forces and ideals existent in the group climate.

Group life comes into existence when persons feel a sense of oneness and when they experience a stability through the strength

of the united whole that is stronger than the sum of its parts. When communion is established, group direction and oughtness become demanding and a strong appeal is made for the loyalty of each person. Individualism loses its appeal. Concern for the releasing of the group potential and the initiation of group action are stronger than the consideration of individual success and achievement.

Group life comes into reality when individuals begin to sense a real fellowship which brings satisfaction. It is then that each individual seeks eagerly to share his life, thoughts, joys, failures, and desires with others and to receive from them personal help and counsel. When good feelings and relationships are established, individuals begin accepting group ideas and commitments felt worthy by the group. They begin to reject those ideas and commitments felt to be unworthy by the group. Each individual begins to evaluate personal ideas and purposes against the group norm. A modification of personality and ideology becomes evident in the group member.

#### HOW DOES GROUP LIFE BECOME REDEMPTIVE?

Group life does not create redemption; it opens the way for God's redemption to occur in the group processes. A Christian group is a special kind of group that meets "in the name of Jesus" and in the hope of the promise expressed by Jesus in Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." When group life goes beyond socialization and mere personal enjoyment and lays hold on God's redemption made possible by the indwelling Holy Spirit, it becomes a redemptive group. When the Holy Spirit becomes the dynamic of group relationships, persons in their sharing become the medium for God's self-disclosure. When individuals begin to open themselves to God, they begin to lose interest in selfish pride and start to live in others and for others, sharing an atmos-

phere open to the inpouring of God's grace. This sensitive group climate becomes redemptive as it helps group members to move beyond the human to respond to the presence of God. In redemptive group life, the tendency is to give self sacrificially in response to others. This interaction brings personal communion and gives support to communication with the Holy Spirit of God through relationships that radiate a godly atmosphere.

A redemptive group understands clearly the source of its creative power, the true purpose of its existence, and the goals that lead to maturity in God's will and destiny. Redemptive maturity comes gradually, quite similar to an individual's redemption. Groups grow; they never remain static. At first they express uncoordinated, individualistic tendencies, but they grow increasingly toward more freedom, cooperation, unselfish sharing, and an adequate handling of emotional problems and crises that arise in group interaction. When the group grows to the extent that it begins to evaluate its quality, to shoulder responsibilities for attitudes and action, and to learn through difficulties and successes, a maturity has been reached which allows the redemptive action of God to penetrate persons and to give direction to what is said and done in the group.

#### GROUP LIFE CONDUCIVE TO REDEPTIVE SHARING

A Christian group makes real to persons a sense of wholeness, acceptance, and positive goodwill. They assist members to become sensitive to the divine commands of God. Such a group is conducive to God's redemptive work and makes possible its sharing with others. The type of group life conducive to redemptive sharing has four characteristics.

1. The group must be basically Christian in its perspective. A redemptive group is unified in Christian ideals which are deep-seated, which carry a sense of worth, and which give satisfaction to individual and group needs. Until Christian ideals are

accepted by the group and each member feels at home in the environment, the group will be wanting in those elements that contribute to revelatory communication. Christian ideals cannot exist in the periphery and be nominal in nature; they must be primary, intimate, causing mind to meet mind, and soul to meet soul. God and Christian ideals must undergird and provide a group with a sense of holy obligation before redemption can be experienced.

2. The group must possess a responsive nature. Since God's redemptive grace is revealed, individuals who make up a group can share only in this redemption as the group takes on a responsive nature. When individuals of a group begin investing themselves wholeheartedly in the group life, they naturally become responsive to group pressures and images. In this responsive state, conditions are created which God may use in revealing himself and in administering his redemption. Once the group is conscious of God's presence, there comes into reality a devotion of selves to redemptive purposes, a giving of selves in the fulfillment of spiritual images, and the unblocking of lives from prejudices, hates, and selfish pride. All this makes possible the inflowing of God and a sharing of his holy gifts throughout the group.

3. The group must allow free interaction. For God to work redemptively in group life, that life must be receptive and support free interaction. When individuals of a group feel free, they can be themselves naturally and without pretense. When a group spirit becomes faultfinding, condemning, and overbearing in nature, the atmosphere becomes a threatening one that closes the free exchange of thoughts, feelings, and dedications. Only in a free group do persons begin to express their true innermost concerns and find help in projecting themselves forward rather than withdrawing from intimate group relationships. Free interaction is essential to redemptive sharing. Individuals are then

able to unite in thought and emotion, to express true feelings, to give witness through a total response to God's glory, and to know always the support of the group.

4. The group must have an inner motivation. The group that supports a redemptive sharing is one that is sparked by such a motivation. Motivation must come from within and be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Individuals become inspired and challenged when group purposes are found to be important and of worth. Power is generated when group members become charged with enthusiasm and feel a willingness to serve because they have accepted the group's existence and its goals as worthy of support. Motivation imposed from without in terms of external rewards will soon die, and the group will become listless and discouraged. A group incentive becomes strong and it continues as such when group members enjoy each other's presence, when they agree and support common purposes, and when they welcome encouragement and suggestions from the group as a whole. When a group begins to accomplish worthy tasks, sensing pride for work well done, and working morale becomes evident which makes the group's influence more powerful in sharing its vitality. Such a group has a source of strength that can turn persons toward God and sustain divine purposes.

Now that a redemptive group has been described, and the characteristics which make a group capable of mediating God's revelation explored, the next step is to show the concerns toward which the redemptive group moves.

#### THE BASIC CONCERNS OF A REDEMPITIVE GROUP

The main objective of a redemptive group is to help each of its members to meet and to hear God and then to be open to the blessings of God's action. To accomplish this objective, the group must be disciplined and willing to inculcate into group life concerns which have to do with relationships of love and trust ex-



pressed in the divine and the human. What are these basic concerns which are so essential to the life and effort of a redemptive group?

1. A redemptive group shares the concern of oneness which affords group members a close love, understanding, and attachment. It is this that helps to overcome loneliness and alienation. Oneness which comes from a unifying love draws together group members and gives human satisfaction. But most of all, it opens persons to the perfect love of God. As long as persons are alienated from each other, they feel unacceptable to each other. They then feel incapacitated to love and to be loved; oneness is impossible. A condition is created which makes individuals resent both the divine and human love when extended. This is overcome in a state of oneness, for then love and understanding are offered freely and are accepted and enjoyed. In a state of giving and receiving, persons are able to enter into the fullness of redemptive sharing, for they are ready to be awakened by God's activity and presence.

2. A redemptive group shares the concern of interaction which establishes between group members a "language of relationships." This is more forceful than the language of words, because it is given and received in mutual love, understanding, and trust. God is able to speak to persons who speak and act in a redemptive fellowship, but such a ready means of communication is not always available to persons who live outside of relationships of love and trust.

3. A redemptive group shares the concern of permissiveness which allows the Holy Spirit to draw group members together in fulfilling love and toward a personal encounter with God. Group life must possess the quality of liberty, of unhindered expression, which gives witness to true thought, feelings, and purposes. This is necessary before true relationships can be established and God's Spirit can be experienced. When the group be-

comes Spirit-filled, its nature is redemptive, for God through group relationships not only reconciles the group members to his love but also uses the group as his means of reconciling group members to each other and to their fellow men. This freedom, this capacity to give and to share through the love of God, leads members to an encounter with God which fills their deepest need and shows them what they ought to become.

4. A redemptive group shares the concern of security, of knowing the thrill of being accepted. Security is a necessary concern of a redemptive group because a person can never assist another without feeling secure himself in his group relations. Security begets security; insecurity begets insecurity. The most effective means of being secure comes from belonging to a redemptive group which loves, accepts, and makes a person realize that he is acceptable and secure just as he is, without pretense. To be able to understand one's true self is indispensable to the development of his responsive nature. A person can never respond to God and be spiritually sustained through group relationships if he is simply playing a role within the group without having discovered his true identity. Security in a redemptive group is more than human. Its source is God who loves and accepts his own, regardless of shortcomings, and who offers his reconciliation.

5. A redemptive group shares the concern of an encounter that establishes a relationship with God which is revealed through oneness and acceptance of group members. This concern should be ever-present, known by every group member, and accepted as the high purpose of the group's existence. An encounter with God enables man to experience God's saving presence through the workings of the Holy Spirit in the interaction of God's community—the redemptive group. The redemptive group thus bears witness to God's truth and becomes instrumental in bringing to man God's encounter.

6. A redemptive group shares the concern of the release of a new godly power. Every member of a redemptive group wants to be released from the alienating factors that disrupt personal relationships. He wants to be released into a new power found within the life of the group. To live in the state of release, knowing that human love and acceptance are satisfying but inadequate to life's basic spiritual needs and knowing that life's demands can be met by the released grace of God, is the joy of a redemptive group life. Until man is released from his egocentric tendencies and begins to love and trust in others, he has not discovered his true identity as a child of God.

7. A redemptive group shares the concern of outreach. This is made possible by a group response that allows God to act through group members who become his living witnesses. One of the outstanding principles of redemptive group sharing is that each member is an agent of God's action. By sharing in the work of the Holy Spirit he becomes a witness for God's outreach to others. By being responsive to God, group members are able to communicate God's blessings to others and to show that the love and forgiveness of God is far superior to human expressions. The church and its redemptive groups have shown that this redemptive outreach by man is one of God's accepted ways of revealing himself. Through such witness, God can make himself and the "good news" of Christ known to a responsive world.

8. A redemptive group shares the concern of redemption. Its members recognize that they stand in the need of redemption even as they are serving as instruments of redemption to others. The assurance of God's redemptive quality is essential to a redemptive group, for it is God and his saving works that make a redemptive group possible. The spirit of the redeemed group comes from God to persons in need of redemption, who believe that God alone can do for them what they cannot do for themselves.

## HOW MEMBERS MAY CONTRIBUTE TO REDEMPITIVE SHARING

Members of a group may help further redemptive sharing (1) by being open and eager to give witness to what God has done redemptively; (2) by being dedicated to the group's redemptive objective, and willing to carry out the group's decisions; (3) by recognizing that all group members have equal rights and privileges in the redemptive fellowship; (4) by seeing that individuals may fulfill their redemptive needs more fully in collaboration than in isolation; (5) by being eager to work for group cooperation and success in any role or status assigned by the group; (6) by being self-reliant and at the same time flexible in disposition; and (7) by being willing to express conflicts freely so that they become accessible to the redemptive action of the group rather than remaining a hidden source of contention.

Group life is constantly changing. It grows toward a Christian maturity or it moves in reverse; it never stands still. The following principles suggest how to enhance the redemptive quality of group life and to keep the group growing toward Christian maturity.

» Acknowledge that God alone is the source of redemption and look to him for that quality which changes life from self-love to God-love.

» Identify and keep in focus the group's Christian purpose.

» Help group members to be sensitive toward attitudes and actions that serve as the means for God's self-disclosure.

» Help group members to adjust to individual and group needs.

» Stress the sense of oneness and encourage a "we-feeling" which affords integration and establishes a community of ideas, feelings, and commitments.

» Encourage free inquiry concerning the conditions that assist and impede the achievement of the group's Christian purpose.

» Observe the status and contributions of each member of the group.

» Evaluate regularly the mood of the group and seek to improve its friendly and cooperative spirit as an inducement to further Christian growth.



PART 4

ORGANIZED GROUP LIFE



## THIRTEEN / THE CHRISTIAN HOME

THE TERM "CHRISTIAN HOME" IS USED frequently in Christian education. It is interpreted to be an intimate fellowship existing under a divine imperative and acknowledging Christ as Lord and Savior. If one adds the adjective Christian to the noun home, he admits a theology, for the term carries the home beyond the physical, the psychological, and the social to the purpose of God who gave it creation and meaning. The Christian home is God-initiated and God-sustained. It was not created by man through a self-seeking love for his own convenience. The Christian home is a creation of God, based on self-giving *agape* love and fidelity. For this reason, it is proper to discuss the Christian home in a theological perspective.

### THE CHRISTIAN HOME AS AN ORDER OF GOD'S CREATION

God, the Creator, climaxed his creation in the Genesis story by creating male and female. He added to their union his sanction: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it'" (Gen. 1:27-28).

Jesus saw clearly the holy order of creation that makes marriage and homelife a part of God's purpose. In Mark 10:6-9, he is recorded as having said: "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.' So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

These biblical references show that homelife has a divine order and purpose and that it can fulfill its destiny only in God and in the recognition of his holy will. The witness of the Bible is that the coming together of man and woman in family life was God's true intention. Family life is a holy relationship and through this state the two joined persons are permitted to share in God's creative powers. This means that the Christian home is an instrument of God's holy purpose which he carries out through family relations.

#### STRENGTHENING THE HOME IN ITS CHRISTIAN STATUS

If the home is to be included among the major agencies for Christian education, it should be controlled by the following principles:

1. Parents should accept the home as a family of God, a part of God's creation. The life of this intimate group is to be lived under the sovereignty of God. This purpose makes the home a family of God—a small group responsive and eager to do God's bidding.

2. Parents should help each home member to establish a covenant relationship between himself and God. This principle is without doubt the greatest task and privilege of the home: to assist each person beginning at the early days of birth to maintain a growing relationship with God.

3. Parents and their children should work diligently to make the home a channel of God, through which he may disclose his

grace. To be Christian, the home should be a channel of God's communication, for God speaks to dedicated persons and through them to others. Thus is made possible a redemptive fellowship within the bonds of the home. Committed family members are able to disclose God's grace to others as they respond more fully to his will and witness through normal living to the increased power in their lives.

4. Parents should personalize the power of God through a home ministry. Parents must become ministers of the Christian faith to their children before their home can be truly Christian. If children cannot visualize God in Christ in the words and deeds of their father and mother, there will be no Christian foundation in the home. Children must feel with assurance that their parents believe in God and that they are convinced that living in God's grace is life's highest purpose. If children do not find this devotion in the home, other Christian sources will have difficulty in convincing them of the efficacy of Christian faith. Christian power is personalized in the lives of parents. Parents set the tempo of the home; they determine its basic philosophy; they lift up that which is to be stressed and given loyalty. Children normally imitate their parents, giving emphasis and commitment to that which parents hold worthy. It is for this reason that parenthood always carries with it the obligation of performing a Christian home ministry.

5. Parents and children alike should be active in a home program of Christian discipleship. Every home member needs to see how he can perform the works of God in his personal life and thus experience a sense of Christian growth. Discipleship implies understanding, faith, devotion, and the carrying out of Christian responsibilities. A true Christian disciple should seek constantly new and fuller ways to express that love and service for others that so characterized the life of Jesus Christ, his Lord and Savior.



## MAINTAINING A CHRISTIAN HOME

Homes differ with the temperament of their families. Some families are oriented to educational and aesthetic interests; others enjoy less studious endeavors that are more devotional in nature. Even so there are certain principles of broad application that can assist most parents in maintaining a Christian home.

1. Keep open to the vitality of God in Christ. Here is the starting point for all Christian endeavors. If parents are not spiritually alive they cannot guide their children into paths of Christian living.

2. Be informed about the ways of Christian growth. Pay special attention to the basic needs of growing life and to the laws of growth that take into consideration individual differences, gradation, adjustment, and discipline.

3. Unite the family through the sacrament of baptism. The Christian family needs the feeling of solidarity. To know that the family is baptized in the church and dedicated to God makes for greater sharing in common Christian purposes. Baptism gives a worthy feeling that the family lives under this commitment to God, that its members all belong to the church.

4. Share together as a family on a Christian level. Unless there is a sympathetic sharing, a giving of selves, the home is nothing more than any other unit of group life. A family should share in common ideas, exchange attitudes and feelings about the wonders of God, and about what is real and important in making life Christian. Questions about God, Jesus, prayer, the Bible, the church, and death can become occasions for parents to guide their children by speaking out of Christian experiences and a deep faith. A parent who will take time to enjoy and share in the fellowship of the children and their friends, entering emotionally in their joys and sorrows, will find that he is forming a foundation upon which Christianity can be shared.

5. Encourage by example private moments of prayer and

Bible study for members of the family. Each member should have daily devotional moments of private meditation that are filled with a sense of communication with God through prayer and Bible study. A deepness comes to life when persons pause for a while and with God alone find peace and strength for Christian living.

6. Maintain family group worship. Families may find time for group worship before or after a meal or in the evening before the bedtime of children. The timing should fit into the convenience of the family pattern. Group worship at home is important for it is a means of building a Christian solidarity. Group worship in the home makes life real in God because it helps all members to become more committed and receptive to the idea that God is a living part of the family unit.

7. Schedule periods of directed study. God discloses himself to informed minds and open hearts. An obligation rests upon the home to help prepare human responses through information and inspiration so that there may be a more adequate communication between home members and God. Study is not man's search for God; it is a preparation of response which aids a person in basic information, attitudes, beliefs, and faith. All this makes more possible the experiencing of God's truth. Parents will find effective "periods of sharing" when the family engages in studious discussions of vital topics of interest, especially the basic Christian beliefs. When religious books, magazine articles of Christian worth, sermons and talks, church school lessons, and the like are commented upon, discussed, and explained, the information helps to improve the receptive minds of family members. Individual study can be planned and directed by parents; topics and beliefs that are needed in certain periods of life can be stressed and given proper thought under parental guidance. Homes should take time for Bible study, for literary projects such as litanies, prayers, poems for worship, for biographical studies

of outstanding church leaders and Christians of history, and for creative activities that deepen the sensitivity of feeling and appreciation. Such home projects assist in preparing the family members for a deeper response to God through reverent study.

8. Make the home a part of the church fellowship. Under God, the home and the church are united; they form a fellowship of redemptive living. For one of these institutions to attempt to exist without the other is to weaken the potentiality of the other. This concept has not been realized fully by many modern parents. They have not seen that the home and the church share in a common redemption and life. The home is a vital part of the larger Christian fellowship called the church. Each institution should receive spiritual assistance from the other. This can happen only when there are parents who emphasize that the church is important and who help the family to give dedicated service to the fulfillment of the church's program. Under this circumstance, the home will become a laboratory of the church continuing the fellowship in family relations. The home, as a part of the church, will add to the spiritual strength of the Christian community.

#### INTEGRATING HOME AND CHURCH

Strong steps are being taken in Christian education to integrate the home into the redemptive fellowship of the church. There is a growing feeling that a home-church relationship is imperative if God's redemption is to be brought into human life. In order for the home to fulfill its divine destiny, it needs to receive strength through its relationships with the larger redemptive community, the church.

The work of the Holy Spirit is not confined to what happens within the walls of a church building or a private home. It operates in the lives of committed people who are giving witness to God in life as it is lived.

Greater home-church integration depends in part upon parents who possess a growing devotion to God and to the role of parenthood. Home education concerning the aims and benefits of the church can also further the process. Home-church integration will also be extended when the church is informed by parents of their needs. Just as the church needs to inform parents about its aims and program, so the church needs insights into home conditions from the parents. The goals and methods of such two-way home and church cooperation should be spelled out into an organization so parents can see clearly what is to be done and how they can assist in its accomplishment. The organization should make use of home visitations, newsletters, bulletins and printed matter, parent-teacher meetings, family nights, parent study groups, weekly assignment notices to parents, and periodic progress reports to parents.

Home-church integration may be aided in yet another important respect by engaging parents in an active role in the church's program. When the church has made practical the means that are conducive to parent cooperation, the next step is to engage parents in the program. If parents and their families are to progress from a passive acceptance of the church to the active support of its program, they need to be drawn into the larger Christian fellowship. Only in this way can they be expected to develop a full appreciation for the values held by the community of believers.

## FOURTEEN / THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY OF GOD

THE CHURCH SHARES WITH THE home in being one of God's distinct redemptive groups. The church is a creation of God, called into being by God so that his holy spirit may work redemptively in a dedicated fellowship. The church functions as a family of God; it is a redemptive fellowship led through a mutual sharing in Christ to be a community of believers in God.

The church's divine origin is inseparable from Christ. The church's witness is that Christ is Lord and Savior. From the beginning of the church, Christ has been its Head, and his spirit has dwelt within its fellowship. So it was that those persons who found new life in Christ formed a redemptive family, for to love Christ was also to love and share in a fellowship imbued with Christ's spirit. Christ is the church's foundation. In Christ, God made manifest his New Covenant for all who enter into this community of faith to enjoy his fellowship and to give continuous witness to his salvation. These convictions lead man to affirm that God has called the church into being to provide a covenantal fellowship with man that is rooted in the spirit of his Son Jesus Christ.



## THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

Man's attempt to capture God's intention for calling the church into being has been expressed in many terms such as "the body of Christ," "the family of God in Christ Jesus," "the community of God's people," "the community of the Holy Spirit," "the communion of saints," and "the redemptive fellowship." These terms seek to capture the idea that the church is a people united in the spirit of Christ and dedicated to give witness to God's redemption and to continue the ministry of Christ in the world.

Randolph Crump Miller has defined the church in these words: "The true church is a fellowship of persons, given to men by the reconciling love of God made manifest in Christ and continuing through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is an experienced relationship with God and man, and it exists wherever the Holy Spirit rules the hearts of men."<sup>1</sup> James D. Smart offers the following definition of the church: "The church is the human instrument called into being by God's revelation of himself in his Word, a people of God living in response to him as his witnesses in the world, that through them God may be known ever more widely as he has been known to them."<sup>2</sup> D. Campbell Wyckoff says of the church: "The church . . . in a true sense is this cloud of witnesses around, the community of the faithful together with their children, the holy, catholic church, the church of Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of love."<sup>3</sup> John B. Harrington interprets the church in these terms: "The church is the community of people who have entered into a New Covenant relation with the Father

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Randolph C., *Biblical Theology and Christian Education* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> Smart, James D., *The Teaching Ministry of the Church* (Westminster), pp. 24 f. Copyright 1954 by W. L. Jenkins. Used by permission.

<sup>3</sup> Wyckoff, D. Campbell, *The Task of Christian Education* (Westminster), p. 74. Copyright 1955 by W. L. Jenkins. Used by permission.

of Jesus Christ.”<sup>4</sup> These understandings of the nature of the church agree substantially with the author’s view that the church is a covenantal family of God, operating under the inspiration and guidance of God’s Holy Spirit, eager to proclaim the gospel of Christ and to accept the task of continuing God’s redemptive act for all mankind.

What are some of the implications that follow from this meaning of the church? The church is a family in covenant relationship with God. The covenant idea is basic to the church for it is made up of the people who have accepted God’s covenant to be his people if he will be their God. God has extended this covenant and the church has accepted it. Behind this covenant is God’s grace and the people’s obligation is so to live in Christ that God may use them to continue and to fulfill his redemptive purposes started in Jesus Christ.

The church is a fellowship inspired and guided by God’s Holy Spirit. The church must be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God’s presence in the church, or in God’s family. The Holy Spirit is at work in the church and through it, working redemptively in the souls of men. Paul spoke of the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:15b-16: “When we cry ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” Implied here is the conviction that God inspires, empowers, and guides his church through the Holy Spirit.

The church is a fellowship used by God’s Holy Spirit. The church was formed to work the works of God, not to carry out human intentions. The willingness to be used by the Holy Spirit and to become God’s servant in the act of human redemption is the commitment that gave the church its birth. This decision, this personal response to belong to God’s family and to be used by

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<sup>4</sup> Harrington, J. B., *Essentials in Christian Faith* (Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 233.

the Holy Spirit so that a new community can be established and sustained, is man's highest obligation and highest privilege in making the church real and relevant.

The church is possessed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. The idea of a believing community gives stress to a gospel. "God's story" bound together the early Christians—they caught the conception that the gospel of Jesus Christ would make them heirs to the promises and truth given by God. Until the gospel becomes central in today's church, announcing what God has disclosed in Christ, the church will be proclaiming less than the "good news" for which it was created to express.

The church is the continuation of God's redemptive act. Redemption is the church's business. Any thought or act which is not related to God's redemption of human life is not worthy of the church. The church by its life and spirit is one of God's main groups for continuing what he started in Christ Jesus. Therefore the church must be governed by the spirit and mission of Christ. It must do what Christ did on earth; that is, help people to become aware of their need of God and of his gifts of love, mercy, and forgiveness.

In this understanding of the church, certain fellowship characteristics are essential to its being and purpose. Six of these are given below.

The church is a fellowship that worships. Worship becomes a natural function of the church as believers share in an atmosphere that helps members open their lives to God's action.

The church is a fellowship that redeems and sustains. All members are in need of redemption, all have fallen short of the fullness of God's purpose. The community's need of redemption and of the forgiveness of sins goes beyond a single event or experience. The sustaining of individuals within the community of believers is an ongoing ministry of the Christian faith.

The church is a fellowship that witnesses. The church accepts,

obeys, and confesses Christ as Lord and Savior. The church is a witness to what God has done, what he is doing, and what he can do. Witnessing is a natural expression and a sign to all persons that God calls and seeks man's response in faith.

The church is a fellowship that teaches and learns. The church seeks to lead every child, youth, and adult into a growing awareness and sensitivity to God and the Christian gospel. Teaching and learning are the necessary functions through which persons are nurtured in Christian fellowship and prepared to share in the church's witness to the world.

The church is a fellowship that has stewardship concerns. The church bears the conviction that all time, abilities, and material possessions are gifts of God to be held in trust and to be used for the glory of God and the benefit of mankind. Christian stewardship as practiced by the church is an expression of gratitude to God for his providence and for his redeeming love expressed in Jesus Christ.

The church is a fellowship that has an ecumenical outreach. The church is a missionary body—it seeks by its very nature to share the gospel of Christ with all the world. The mission of the church includes the concerns for social improvement, better education, better medical care, and better economic conditions, but it goes beyond all these to the point of helping persons to become aware of and committed to the love of God as mediated through Jesus Christ.

#### THE EDUCATIONAL TASK

The educational task of the church can be summed up in one term: Christian nurture. The church seeks constantly to nurture persons in a growing awareness of and in an everincreasing response to God as he is revealed in the Christian community.

Christian nurture can be realized through proper use of the organization, administration, and supervision of the church. Or-

ganization or structural form, administration or functional personnel, and supervision or fruitful productivity make up the process of Christian nurture. Too many churches undercut the true role of Christian nurture by making the organization, administration, and supervision ends in themselves rather than using them as channels through which God's grace may enter life, healing and saving all who are a part of the church community. True Christian nurture is possible when the church is able to turn its "machinery" into a means of communicating God's revelation and redemption.

Christian nurture can also be realized through a fellowship that contains a redemptive quality. Christian nurture is possible when the church becomes a fellowship made redemptive through the working of the Holy Spirit. This redemptive quality increases only when the fellowship is responsive to God and when it gives expression to what God has done and is still doing in and through committed persons. The sharing in the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit by ministering to personal needs of those both in and outside of the Christian fellowship is the nurturing task of the church. When the church guides its members into a commitment to God in Christ and inspires them to be channels of communication of the Christian gospel, it will fulfill its function of serving as an envioning fellowship in Christian nurture. When the church becomes responsive to this ideal and keeps alive to the witness of God, then by its redemptive quality God will be able to use the fellowship in nurturing the world in Christ.

Christian nurture can further be realized through Christian leadership. The Christian gospel must be interpreted, evaluated, shared, and made relevant. In this effort, a systematic plan of leadership education is needed. Such a plan should make use of leadership courses, laboratory schools, workshops, in-service observation and apprenticeship, and leadership conferences. These are essential in the development of leadership skills needed to



communicate the gospel and to lead students to an encounter with God. The church must view leadership in terms of a witnessing for God, believing that Christian nurture comes by the grace of God.

Yet another way that Christian nurture can be realized is through teaching-learning endeavors that give meaning to God's saving activities in human life. The church should base its teaching-learning ministry on the redemptive love of God and should stress a growing awareness of and response to God's revelation and grace. It is in this framework alone that the church can carry out its task of Christian nurture by becoming a redemptive fellowship of believers.

The church is more than a building with a program of religious activities carried on under a single roof and directed by select leaders. The church is a family of God, a community of believers in Christ Jesus who come from a society that is wide and varied but who share in one overriding redemptive purpose. This redemptive community called the church exists in all group life that is responsive to the Father of Jesus Christ, regardless of its location or title. The church, then, is strengthened or weakened by all forms of community existence, for life is unitary and all forms of community life enter into the formative matrix from which persons receive their experiences, meanings, and values. Because the church is a community fellowship of Christian believers, the church must include the home and community group life within its program of Christian nurture.

Christianity demands the total response of a person, which includes all his relationships, devotions, and commitments. To be a Christian, one must give his whole self in response to God and must be willing to appropriate God's will in his total life. A Christian holds no part of his life, his devotions, or commitments in reserve; he gives all in love and trust to God. The church needs to enter man's whole being and permeate his larger world

with its nurture. Its influence needs to be felt in his total environment so that he will be able to respond wholly to God through all loves, devotions, and aspirations. Because Christianity demands man's all, the church is forced to carry out its nurture in all facets of his living.

The family phase of the church precedes its institutional phase in the lives of growing persons. A child's formative years are the preschool years during which early home experiences are determinative. Christian nurture should be at work in the preschool years, forming a religious foundation long before the child becomes an intelligent participant in the formal education of the church. No stronger Christian nurture can be carried out than that which occurs in the home. It is in this context that the child needs to discover that God is love and that his influence pervades the common activities of daily life.

#### HOME AND COMMUNITY

Home and community agencies afford the church many resources for Christian nurture. The church cannot circumscribe the whole of Christian living within the circumference of a building. Only a part of life is lived in organized church groups. Resources for Christian growth exist in all of life. An alert church will seek to be a part of both home and community life in order to discover and develop the potentialities that can be used for Christian nurture. The church needs to interpret, to guide, and to integrate all phases of individual and social life so that persons of all ages and in all walks of life are introduced into the redemptive fellowship where they may fulfill their highest potentialities under the nurturing love of God.

The church redeems its heritage as it functions as one of God's distinct redemptive groups. It is a covenantal family of God, inspired and guided by God's Holy Spirit as it proclaims the gospel of Christ and continues God's redemptive act for all man-

kind. Its supreme task is to bring people into a covenant relationship with God through the gospel of Jesus Christ. This task is given to it by its creator, God. The church is therefore not free to choose its own duties, according to the personal will of its members and the social circumstances of its times. The church's task can be fulfilled only in the grace of God, for God is the church's only true redemptive source. Christian nurture is the process through which the grace of God is mediated. When the church realizes its true form announced in the New Testament, it becomes a fellowship centered in God, speaking the truth of what God has done in Christ redemptively.

The church is an imperfect instrument, maintaining many concepts and practices that impede the fulfillment of its task. The main weakness of the church is its members' tendency to forget its divine purpose.

## FIFTEEN / THE COMMUNITY AS GOD'S WITNESS

COMMUNITY IS MORE THAN GEOGRAPHICAL location. It is basically the grouping of people who find pleasure, material gain, and spiritual enrichment in association with each other. It exists in social relationships and especially in the mutual sharing of common experiences. Community exists in many forms. It is found in the home, the church, and the school as well as in economic, political, and neighborhood groups. It is influenced by movies, radio, television, daily newspapers, periodicals, and advertisements. Community thus includes more than the home and the church; the term is extended to include all personal and social communication and group experiences—whether they be Christian or secular, or both—as they affect persons who live in a certain locale.

From the Christian perspective, the true community is the redemptive fellowship of the church. The larger social community has not reached this redemptive status because it contains strong elements of secularism, materialism, and even atheism. These non-Christian influences pervert the group life, prey upon the redemptive fellowship, bring suffering, confusion, and insecurity, thereby weakening the Christian attributes of communal living. The following pages will be devoted to the needs

of the present cultural community and to suggestions offered for aiding the community in its efforts to move closer to the realization of its true status as intended by God. The discussion will attempt to show that a true community must be nurtured within a God context.

### THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF COMMUNITY LIFE

The Christian view of community life is that God is its creator and that he stands as Lord over his creation, intending that no part of human existence is to be lived outside of his providence. Thus the origin of the community is placed within God's will; the intention is that men shall live as brothers having a common heavenly Father. Man is made a communal being in order that he may realize the potential of his being as he joins with others in a relationship of love and forgiveness. It was God who placed man in community and who destined him to live in love with his fellow men.

Man's only way of perceiving the purpose of community life and of his individual role in it is through God's revelation. If man is to know the nature of community lived in its fullest potentiality, he must experience it in a context in which he encounters God as active, outgoing love. The first step toward experiencing deeper community is fellowship with God. Without God the human ego becomes selfish, arrogant, self-centered, and begins to prey on others for personal gain. Personal selfishness impedes the building of true community. It serves to block God's intention that every human creature should "love his neighbor as himself." Before the true community can be experienced, persons must be freed from the control of selfish motives and become primarily concerned over how they may serve communal interests and the needs of their brothers.

Each existing imperfect community where people live and where even the redemptive fellowship has to function and edu-



cate, must be interpreted for what it really is—a field for evangelism, a field in which the church fellowship can function by bringing persons into the true community of God. This hope for the true community, which actually is the kingdom of God, probably never will be fulfilled in this world; but it can be so anticipated that it will place upon all social groupings the commands of God in Christ, causing them to understand that the kingdom's way is the true way of community life.

The purpose of the true community must be understood in order that persons may see clearly its high calling. The purpose of the true community is related to the purpose of man's creation. In this theological context, the purpose of the true community assumes a fourfold nature:

1. The true community exists to help community members realize that they must live together in the confrontations of God. God is the reality that makes the community possible; without God there could be no community, for there would be no reality behind its existence to make it responsible and qualified. God has a claim on his human creature, and only as man faces God's confrontations does he truly exist and live the life intended by God, his Maker.

2. The true community exists to help community members experience the meaning and relevancy of the Christian gospel. To know God is to know the Christian gospel; the gospel makes God real and shows how he has acted and has revealed himself in his Son, Jesus Christ. The community must accept the purpose of making the gospel meaningful and relevant as the community members interact, and it must provide the means necessary for understanding that will result in a deeper insight and commitment to God. The community cannot live in a connective way with God without endeavoring to make real the vision of what he has done, and can do, for people. This is the story of the Christian gospel which must be understood: God can help people to do

what they cannot do for themselves—live wholly and redemptively.

3. The true community exists to help community members become channels through which the Holy Spirit of God may love and redeem. The community must communicate the Holy Spirit of God, for here is the source which redeems and creates the spirit of community. Members become responsive in this spirit of community. They then become channels through which God may work to make his purposes of love and redemption known. When the Holy Spirit is experienced by people, they discover a new love and a new power that give strength to their words and deeds. Once the Holy Spirit begins working freely in persons, they motivate others to become channels of God's active presence. This process, once set in motion, continues to bring individuals together. They know God is working within them. Through this form of witness, the community is set into a redemptive, God-centered context.

4. The true community exists to nurture persons in the highest spirit of community possible. This high state of community upholds a nurture that views life in the likeness of Christ. This nurture is based on the affirmation that Christ is Lord, that all attitudes and behavior patterns of persons are conditioned by this fact, and that they must reflect the quality of his life. When community members begin exemplifying the life and teachings of Jesus, growing in spirit and assuming a greater responsibility for Christian ends, the community will be fulfilling its purpose, for then God will be made known in the lordship of Christ.

#### CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND THE COMMUNITY

Christian education has not directed a strong, gospel-centered program toward the community, and the community has not been adequate in its response toward the program of Christian education. The problem, therefore, must be shared by both Chris-

tian education and the community. The existing community can assist by being more cooperative in nature. Christian education by its character cannot be coercive in its approach; it must work in free minds and hearts. If the true community is to be advanced, this reality must come through a strong incentive on the part of Christian education and through a willing response on the part of the existing community. On the part of the latter, there needs to be a willingness to work toward a redemptive fellowship.

The existing community can assist by making available certain means of communication to be used for guiding people into deeper spiritual insights and commitments. In this way it will be living its role as a co-worker with the program of Christian education.

The existing community can assist by turning to the church for the main source for community advancement. The factor that has contributed most to the secular status of community life is the turning of most of its leaders toward unchristian sources for community sustenance. When the existing community turns to the church and Christian education expecting the restoration of broken relationships, guidance for conflicting ideologies, the elimination of sub-Christian attitudes and acts, and believing that redemption comes through the God of Jesus Christ, then the community will begin to visualize new meanings and new horizons that belong to the structure of the true community. The existing community can be awakened to its need for a new source of power under God's divine presence, and when this occurs the true community is being born.

The existing community and Christian education leaders can further cooperate by forming a planning and coordinating community council. The council should be formed from a wide representation of members of the community. At frequent meetings they should plan and execute a program of community life enriched by Christian values. The council should be divided into

subcommittees dealing with family life, public education, recreation, politics, business vocations, church life, health and medical care, social relations, and community morals. The subcommittees should make surveys, conduct study groups, and make recommendations to the general council. Community problems could then be approached cooperatively.

Christian education is the leaven so needed by the existing community, for it has the means by which the redemptive forces of God can be released. Only through God can a community see its imperfections and discover a power that will advance the spirit of the true community.

## SIXTEEN / EPILOGUE

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION HAS BEEN given a rebirth. The renaissance has been structured in a theological orientation that stresses a self-disclosing God, who is both transcendent and immanent and who demands of man a dependent and responsive self-giving to him and his unfolding revelation. This effort has been based on the conviction that the purpose of Christian education is to educate man in his growing sensitivity toward God. To accomplish this task, Christian education must be empowered by its true authority, God, and given a redemptive source that is vigorous and fruitful. The theological move for Christian education has been deliberate and forthright: from the optimistic, liberalistic tenets of the first half of the twentieth century to the more pessimistic, but more realistic, tenets of supernaturalism which have a relevancy to man's moral predicament.

The new theological focus has made the sovereignty of God central, placing man and his social environment in an important but secondary position where man is dependent on God for his beneficent grace. The new focus has modified and at times eliminated the old liberalistic theology's emphases on a weak, social immanence of God which presented an ambiguity as to the proper relationships of God and man. Because the liberalistic



theology is too anthropocentric, certain aspects of its thought have been criticized as inadequate. These include its stress on the goodness of man and the denial of his moral predicament; the attitude of self-sufficiency based on man's ability to reason and acquire physical wealth; the reliance on personal and social subjectivity; the belief that salvation is geared to man's search and experimentation; the advocacy that the gospel is a mere moralism; and the view that the content of Christian education should be life-centered rather than theologically and biblically centered. These and similar beliefs placed emphases on the wrong concerns and perverted the Christian truths of the holy Bible and the church.

In this uplifting of God in Christian education, man has not been neglected or obscured. He has been viewed in what is believed to be his true status: a creature of God, created in God's own image, and dependently so, for he is not sufficient in himself. He is believed to be in need of redemption, for his state of conflict, his sense of self-pride, and his self-loyalty have resulted in a perverted state of his being. He is a sinner and a candidate for salvation. Salvation comes through his faith and obedience to God through Jesus Christ.

Man has been viewed as a learner capable of growth. He has been so created by God who has equipped him to learn, to change, and to grow in divine truth. It is up to Christian education to use well what God has so graciously given to man in order that man may through learning share in God's resources. Such a theological interpretation of man is felt to be necessary, for man is believed to be a product of God, both free and determined by God, whose fulfillment is to be realized in a God-man relationship. Since this is man's status, Christian education must give added emphasis to man's theological orientation so that it can teach and nurture him properly through insights into God-centered purposes.

Christian theology and educational procedure need to be carefully balanced and kept in proper relationship. To separate the two would be disastrous. God has geared Christian education to himself and also to human nature. He expects Christian education to make use of insights into human nature, the laws of learning, and the means of effective communication in establishing divine-human relationships.

Methods are instrumental and should become channels through which the Christian faith and the Holy Spirit of God can be mediated and received, establishing a growing relationship with God and man. In this setting, the teaching-learning procedure becomes evangelistic, guiding persons into an "I-Thou" encounter that they may realize their fulfillment in God.

The curriculum has been interpreted in a revelatory background that is both biblical and extrabiblical. The extrabiblical must support the biblical and theological affirmations. All materials used must be conducive to the channeling of God and his truth into personal responses. The curriculum must function in a clearly divine direction and under a divine imperative if it is to reveal God and his many confrontations.

Group life also is essential to the educational process, for it affords the environment in which Christian sharing may take place. It must be redemptive and go beyond mere social pleasures if it is to give support to Christian education. There must be an indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God throughout the fellowship, for it is God who enters into man's relationships as sharing persons begin to open themselves in love to each other and to God. Group life must become a medium of God's self-disclosure if it is to be fruitful for Christian education.

The home, the church, and the community have all been called into existence by God for redemptive purposes. All three agencies need to be related in order to carry out their divine purpose. The home, the church, and the community need to be

kept alive to the God of Jesus Christ in order that they may fulfill their redemptive purpose. God's holy commands rest upon all three.

God is the need of both man and Christian education. Therefore, God must be given his rightful place at the center of life, not in the periphery. He must be given honor through obedience and trust if Christian education is to fulfill its God-given purpose. The purpose is to guide persons to the redeeming and life-giving God who seeks and freely gives himself to all who are open and committed to his will and purpose as revealed in the truths of the Christian gospel.

PART 5

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